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MONTHLY MAGAZINE

MARCH 1911

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By ELLA MIDDLETON TYBOUT

*Author of "The Smuggler," "The Wife of the Secretary of State,"
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LIPPINCOTT'S
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MARCH, 1911



THE LITTLE BROWN SHOE

BY

ELLA MIDDLETON TYBOUT

Author of "The Smuggler," "A Bride for Casey," etc.

I.

IN the smooth bark of a birch tree a man was carving a name. He formed each letter with great attention to detail, cutting deeply into the tree as though he meant his work to withstand the ravages of time and to last at least as long as the tree itself.

A girl was seated on the ground, watching him, while the autumn sunlight touched her caressingly. Now and then as the breeze stirred among the branches a little shower of scarlet, gold, and russet leaves fell upon her head and into her lap unheeded, for she was giving all her attention to the carving of her name.

A provokingly pretty girl, she was, possessed of that indefinable something known as charm. One saw it in the dimple that came and went in her left cheek, in the curve of her red-lipped mouth, in every movement of her slender, rounded figure, and every gesture of her slim brown hands. Down her back hung two long, thick braids of hair, undeniably red, but very beautiful, with curling tendrils that turned to gold when the sun touched them.

The man carved the last letter and flung himself upon the ground beside her.

"Bessie," he said, "you grow prettier every day—but of course your mirror tells you that."

She shook her head with an impatient little laugh.

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"People who live in log cabins on the mountains don't have mirrors, Mr. Archer. A bit of looking-glass is the best we can do, and mine is cracked across the middle."

Archer studied her intently.

"Fate is so often perverse, Bessie. You were born for purple and fine linen. By rights, you should have several motor-cars, mirrors galore, and all the gowns and jewels and other luxuries that your heart could desire."

Bessie's dimple was suddenly in evidence.

"Perhaps I shall have, some day."

"She shall walk in silk attire, and siller hae to spare," he quoted—"which reminds me that I brought you a slight remembrance from abroad—a little gold locket. Being heart-shaped, it speaks for itself far more eloquently than mere words of mine. How is that for an appropriate speech of presentation, Bessie?"

The girl clasped her hands ecstatically and gazed from Archer to the heart of gold upon its slender chain. Bessie English's brown eyes were shaded by long black lashes, and could express fathomless depths of soul while their owner's mind was a temporary vacuum; and she was not ignorant of their power.

"You brought this to *me*!" she said.

"It is only a trifle. I brought something to almost all my friends. I could n't forget the little girl I've watched grow up into a most lovely woman, and with whom I spent so many pleasant hours before I went abroad. Sometimes, Bessie, I wonder what Fate holds in reserve for you—a long life, I hope, and a happy one."

She looked steadily at him for a moment, then her eyelids drooped until their thick fringe touched her cheek. With a caressing gesture, she laid the locket against her face for a moment, then held it toward him.

"Fasten it around my neck," she said. "You've given me a heart of gold. What can I give you in return?"

It was an obvious opportunity—a challenge as skilfully advanced by this mountain girl as by an experienced coquette—but Archer did not respond. He clasped the chain about her throat a little hurriedly, then looked at his watch.

"I'm afraid I must go, Bessie." He spoke with an apparent effort, but the girl did not try to detain him.

"It is getting late," she acquiesced. "When shall I see you again?"

"Perhaps not at all."

"You're going away?"

"Very soon."

Her pretty face clouded, and she gave an involuntary shiver.

"Winter's coming," she said—"winter in the mountains. A-a-h, how I hate it! Snow and ice, and I shut up in the cabin day after day, night after night. But I won't go through another one—no, I won't. Perhaps next spring you'll not find me here, Mr. Archer, so you'd better make the most of me while you can."

Archer had risen, and was standing looking down at her appreciatively. Bessie glanced up, met his eyes, and smiled as if satisfied.

"Yes," she said; "I may not be here when you come back to the mountains next summer."

"Not be here!" he echoed. "Why, Glen Summit would n't be the same place without you, Bessie! You belong to the landscape just as much as do the mountains themselves. I simply cannot and will not imagine it without you. You must n't even suggest such a thing."

She rose and shook the leaves from her short black skirt.

"All the same, Mr. Archer, I may not be here. And now I've got to go. I'm very, very sorry you don't want to see me even once more, for I thought—but it's all right, of course, and it does n't matter what a girl happens to think. So it's good-by—perhaps for always. Oh, yes, I *do* mean it. But I'm sorry I won't see you again, for maybe I'll want your advice about—something."

"Can't you tell me now what the trouble is?"

"No," she said; "not to-day. But I thought you'd surely help me if I needed it. You—you always said you would; and now you are going away without even seeing me again."

And then, because they both were young, because her eyes had grown misty and soft, with a hurt look in their brown depths; and because Fate, with her strong invisible thread, was standing close beside him, Archer yielded to an impulse and, coming closer to the girl, took both her hands in his.

"Bessie," he said earnestly, "don't do anything rash or foolish."

"Why not?" she replied. "What difference does it make—to you?"

"I don't understand you to-day, Bessie," he continued; "but I'm a little troubled by what you've just said. Perhaps you did not really mean anything, but I'm most awfully afraid that some day you will do something hastily that you will be sorry for all your life. Will you promise me not to go away until I see you again, and we have a chance to talk things over?"

"Then, it appears, you *can* see me, after all. And when?"

"When and where you say, Bessie."

She pondered gravely for a few moments, then drew away her hands.

"I'll put a note under the stone—here," she said, indicating the

foot of the birch. "I can't say just when it will be, but very soon. You'll surely come?"

"If you will promise what I asked. I don't mean to let you leave Glen Summit, Bessie, unless I know all about it. Will you give me your promise?"

"Well," she hesitated, and then smiled at him, "yes, I'll promise. But I can't see what difference it makes to you what I do or where I go."

She waited an instant for a reply, then turned toward the little path that led up the mountain.

"Good-by," she said, and walked away without a backward glance.

Archer watched her until she disappeared, then walked slowly and thoughtfully down the mountain toward the village that nestled in the valley at its base.

The path that Bessie followed led up the mountain, but beside the birch tree a branch forked down into the ravine. Had Archer looked behind him, he would have seen a man emerge from the bushes that clustered about the path and advance to the tree, where he studied intently the name carved upon its bark. He was the typical young mountaineer, strong and vigorous of figure, with a shock of light hair bleached colorless by exposure to sun and rain. There was an ugly scowl upon his brow as he traced each of the six letters with his finger, and looked down the path where Archer was fast diminishing into a black speck upon the landscape. His small blue eyes narrowed unpleasantly as he gazed, while his whole face gradually settled into an expression of sullen discontent and hate. Then he turned again to the name upon the tree.

"Bessie," he said. "*Bessie!* D—— him."

Meanwhile, the girl walked up the steep little path with the ease of one accustomed to the ascent, and as she went she sang softly to herself. The path terminated upon a large, flat-topped rock that jutted abruptly from the mountain, bare and bleak indeed in comparison with the verdure-covered earth behind it.

Bessie stepped out upon the rock and looked sharply around. Then she put her hands to her mouth and gave the call of the wood pigeon twice.

"Coo-ee!" she called. "Coo-ee!" and the bird-mate itself might have been deceived.

The leaves carpeting the ground beneath the giant oak that grew at the back of the rock rustled, and a man appeared from behind the tree. Slipping his arm around her waist, he drew her to him and tried to look into her eyes, but she kept her face resolutely averted.

"Kiss me!" he cried. "Kiss me!"

It was more of a command than a request, but the girl shook her head, and with an angry movement freed herself from his encircling arm. He laughed and stepped back a few paces.

"She's the gladdest of the gladdest
When she's glad;
She's the saddest of the saddest
When she's sad;
But the gladness of her gladness
And the sadness of her sadness
Is n't in it with her madness
When she's mad,"

he quoted.

"Don't tease me, Jim Gordon. I *am* angry with you."

"I know it, dearest, but it was not my fault. I really could not come last evening."

"I came."

"Ah, but that's different! I've explained it to you a dozen times, at least. I wanted to come—you know that."

He put his arm around her again, and this time she did not turn away.

"Don't you *know* I wanted to come?" he repeated.

"Jim," she questioned, "do you really love me?"

"I surely do"—there was an undertone of earnestness in his voice—"so much, Bessie, that I am going to take you away from here, because I cannot bear the thought of this winter without you."

The girl looked away into the horizon wistfully. Her world had been limited indeed, and for the most part bounded by mountains beyond which she had never penetrated. She believed that behind them stretched Elysian fields of pure delight, where the people who filled the hotels each summer wandered at will, and where the sun shone without ceasing. Bessie longed with all her heart to go beyond the mountains, and she meant to do it. She sat down upon the rock, and beckoned her companion to do likewise.

"Tell me again about the theatres," she said, "and the shops, Jim, and the little flat I'm to have, with a real porcelain bath-tub and hot and cold water. Oh, and the restaurants, where we'll have supper after the play. Oh, Jim!"

He fell in with her mood, his eyes watching the color that came and went in her lovely face, and his hand holding one of her glistening braids as though he liked to feel it there.

"I'll be so proud of you, Bessie, for you will be the handsomest woman there always. And you'll have a long opera cloak trimmed with soft fur—ermine, I think. Your neck and arms will be bare,

and whiter than the lace on your dress. I'll love to clasp a collar of pearls around that throat, Bessie."

"And I'll have you always with me," she interrupted—"always, Jim. It will be heaven!"

The man's face clouded, and he straightened his shoulders as one involuntarily does when one has an unpleasant task to perform.

"Bessie," he said very quietly, "you and I must have a serious talk, and it might as well be now. You know I love you?"

"Why, of course, Jim."

"But when we go to the city I cannot be always with you, as I should like to be."

"Why not?"

"Because"—he did not meet her eyes—"because, Bessie—I am going to be married."

"Yes," she agreed, "to me. I was wondering yesterday how it would seem when people called me Mrs. Gordon."

Gordon muttered something beneath his breath, then rose and walked restlessly back and forth upon the rock. At last he paused and stood before her, speaking calmly, but with evident decision.

"Now, listen, Bessie, and be reasonable."

"I am listening, Jim."

"My dear little girl——" Gordon hesitated for a moment, then sat down beside her and took her hand in both his own. "Sweetheart," he whispered, "don't look at me like that. Do you want to break my heart?"

"What of *my* heart, Jim?"

"It is not your heart any longer, for you gave it to me. Can't you trust me to take care of it?"

"I—don't—know."

"But I *do*. Listen, Bessie. I love you! Every bit of you is dear to me. I love your glorious hair, your brown eyes that say so many things to me, your soft red lips, your dimple—all that makes you *you*. And you love me—you have told me so. Haven't you?"

"Yes," she breathed; "yes, Jim."

"And so," he continued, "we belong to each other, now and always, Bessie. I cannot marry you, because I have promised some one else, but that is no reason we should not be happy in our own way."

"Who is it?"

"I shall always love you best," he persisted, disregarding the question—"always, dearest, always. Never think for a moment you are not first with me, for you are—you *are*. There is something in you, Bessie, that appeals to something in me. I don't know what it is, but it is *there*. I must have you near me, I must see you, touch you,

be with you often, or I am miserable. Ah, my love, my love, I cannot live without you, but it is impossible for me to marry you, for I am promised to some one else. An honorable man, Bessie, cannot break his word, especially in such matters. And besides this, there are other important reasons that I'll tell you later."

"Who is the girl?"

She spoke in a calm, even voice, and Gordon, who had expected tears and reproaches, looked at her in amazement. He hesitated a moment, then replied, for, after all, it was something she must know sooner or later.

"It is Miss Carrington."

"A-a-h!" Bessie drew in her breath quickly, then sprang suddenly to her feet and faced him with flashing eyes.

"Listen to me, Jim Gordon," she said: "you shan't marry her—do you hear? I'll go to her myself—yes, I will! And I'll go to the Bishop, too, and tell him about the little flat in the city. Do you think he'll let his niece marry you *then*? You know he won't."

"I'm sure you will not do anything so foolish, Bessie."

He spoke quietly, but the girl was quite beside herself with passion.

"Foolish!" she cried. "*Foolish!* And after all the promises you've made me, and the things you've told me? Lies, I suppose, all lies!"

"They were not lies; they were the truth. I swear to you most honestly, Bessie, that it is you I love—not the woman I'm going to marry. And you'll be near me always. You shall have everything you want, Bessie—a maid to wait upon you, and all the clothes your heart could wish; gowns and jewels and everything money can buy you; and you'll have me to love and care for you always."

She was listening now, and he saw his advantage and hastened to follow it up.

"With me you'll always be the only girl in the world, really. What does anything else matter if we know we love each other—and we *do* know it, eh, Bessie?"

"I don't know whether I love you now, Jim, or whether I—hate you."

"But *I* know"—he took her hand and drew her gently toward him—"so we'll be happy in our own way, Bessie, and you will be a dear, reasonable girl, and not make any more foolish threats about going to the Bishop and upsetting our little castle in the air."

"It was not a mere threat," she interrupted. "You know that."

"Do you realize what would happen," he warned her, "if you did that? I should simply go away and never see you again. You would have—nothing."

Bessie moved impatiently, and her glance chanced to fall upon

the gold heart around her throat. Her face cleared suddenly, and she raised her hand to the locket.

"You would have nothing," he repeated.

"I'm not so sure of that, Jim. There are other men in the world besides you."

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say."

Gordon noticed the locket in her hand, and his face grew dark. He pondered uneasily.

"I don't like to think I have hurt you, Bessie," he said at last. "It is like hurting myself, you know."

She said nothing, but her fingers closed upon the little gold heart, and her brown eyes were grave and thoughtful. Gordon watched her silently for a few moments, then he gently removed her fingers from the locket and held her hand firmly in his own.

"I'm sorry, dear," he whispered, "very, very sorry to have hurt you. Whatever you want you shall have, and perhaps something can be arranged to satisfy you. I mean you to be happy, Bessie—and what does anything else matter? Only tell me what to do, and I will do it."

She looked at him with a strangely sweet expression.

"Ah, Jim," she said, "you don't love me the way I love you. I suppose you can't."

"I want you, Bessie, and I mean to have you. You are mine, and nobody shall separate us—*nobody*. Ah, now you're smiling! I've been wondering where the dimple had hidden itself for so long. There it is again—please don't send it away. I think, my sweetheart, that you and I will go to town the end of this week. What do you say?"

"Oh, Jim! *Really?*"

"And I'm not sure I'll be married, after all. There is only one girl for me, you know. Perhaps I can get out of it, and then—eh, Bessie?"

Bessie's eyes answered eloquently, and he continued rapidly:

"So you must not go to the Bishop, Bessie, and I know you won't, if I ask you not to. I can trust you. And we'll talk things over and see what is best for us to do. I'll write you what day we will start, and put my letter in the hollow of the old oak, as usual. You won't need to bring anything with you, you know, for I mean to give you everything."

"Oh, Jim!"

"And don't wear that little locket. I'll give you something much handsomer after we get to town. The very best is not good enough for you. But, Bessie, you must promise to be true to me."

"Why, of course, Jim."

"I don't know. Sometimes I don't feel altogether sure of you, and it rouses the very devil within me. So promise me solemnly."

He put his hand beneath her chin and raised her face to his, looking down into her eyes earnestly.

"Promise," he repeated.

And Bessie promised, slowly and unwillingly, and as though she could not help herself. He laughed and bent his head until their faces touched.

"Kiss me," he said. "Kiss me," and now the girl willingly obeyed him.

"All the same, Jim," she said some time later, as she prepared to go down the mountain, "you must be careful not to try my love too much, for it won't stand it. I'll go away with you when and where you say, for just now I'm quite crazy about you, and I've simply got to be near you. But you shall never marry Peggy Carrington while I'm alive."

As Bessie English approached the cabin which she called home, she was aware of a figure lounging over the gate, a figure which, as she drew near, straightened itself and came to meet her.

"I'd like to know what you want here, Lemuel Watkins," she remarked by way of greeting.

Lemuel took a chew of tobacco before replying, spat with precision at an inoffensive white hen, and then spoke briefly and to the point:

"I've got pretty stiddy work, two good hogs, a cabin of my own, and a yaller mule. You need n't never want fur food nor drink, and yer daddy he likes me. Will you marry me, Bess?"

The girl tossed her head angrily. This same pretty head was filled with visions of fur-trimmed opera cloaks and similar luxuries, therefore the yellow mule and two fat hogs did not appeal favorably to her. Lemuel stood before her with very real love and longing in his heart. The fact that his small eyes expressed nothing whatever was his misfortune and not his fault, but Bessie looked at him scornfully.

"Marry you," she said, "and live always with you. In time we'd be like them"—by a comprehensive wave of the arm she indicated her parents within the cabin. "No, thank you, Lem. I guess not."

She laid her hand on the gate and attempted to enter, but his bulky figure blocked the way, and he did not offer to move.

"Let me in," she commanded. "I don't want to stand here with you all day."

Again Lemuel spat, this time at the gate.

"You kin go in, fur all of me," he said; "but I jest want to tell you this, Bess: Ef you don't marry me, you don't marry nobody. So be keerful, or it might n't be good fur yer health."

II.

MINE host of the Little Lodge was disappointing, from an artistic viewpoint. He was small, shrivelled, and sour of visage, instead of round, rubicund, and brimming with jollity. Moreover, he never offered the chance guest a tankard of ale.

"Ale!" he had said on one occasion. "Ale! Huh! *My* patrons like a dry Martini, and they want the right blend, too."

Jeremiah Biggs knew the right blend. His ability to produce it had enabled him to break away from the rank and file of waiters and establish the Little Lodge.

It was built of logs with the bark still clinging to them, and it had small, many-paned windows and rough stone chimneys. Jeremiah himself would have preferred pressed brick, plate glass, and steam heat, just as he considered The Belvidere or The Marlborough eminently proper names; but, as Mrs. Biggs sensibly remarked, what was the use in paying good money to an architect and then not adopting his suggestions?

To the Little Lodge in the summer season came the thirsty for refreshment. The hungry came also, for Mrs. Biggs was as one inspired where waffles were concerned, and she also knew a thing or two about hot rolls, fried chicken, and the like.

The Lodge was admirably situated. Pedestrians found it convenient to rest there a half-hour or so; wagon-loads of summer visitors liked to drive over from neighboring hotels; and parties of cottagers from select localities, where hotels were not allowed, would often come for supper and to watch the moon rise through the clove. Some one had written a poem about "moonlight on the purple hills," and sent it to Mr. Biggs as a souvenir of a memorable supper. Jeremiah read it through twice, and then told his wife that he "could n't seem to sense it nohow"; but he tacked it up by the window, nevertheless.

When the mountains were gorgeous with red and yellow, and persimmons could be eaten with impunity, the hotels closed their doors. The cottagers, however, remained another six weeks or so before fading away, one by one. Then, and not till then, the Little Lodge took in its sign and balanced the season's books.

"I would n't waste them logs, Jerry," remarked Mrs. Biggs, late one October afternoon. "What's the use in a fire big enough to roast an ox when there's only you and me? I'd sooner set in the kitchen, any way."

"Me, too," agreed Jeremiah. "I can't abide a wood fire—scorching your face and freezing your back. It's almost time to be going down, thank Heaven! I've had enough of it."

"Tut, tut!" remonstrated Mrs. Biggs. "Don't be grumpy because it rains. Haven't we had a fine season, I'd like to know?"

"Good enough," admitted Jerry, "but all the same— What's that?"

He hurried into the hall and ushered in a visitor, whose dripping garments made little pools upon the shining floor. The new arrival shook himself after the manner of a water spaniel.

"Bah, what a night! Hello, Jerry! Take my mackintosh, won't you? And bring me a B. and S. I am chilled through."

"Certainly, Mr. Richard. Will you be staying for supper?"

"Supper? Yes, and breakfast, too. I'm too fond of my neck to risk it climbing wet rocks. You must put me up for the night."

"Very well, Mr. Richard. Did you walk up?"

"The motor is in the gully half way down the mountain. I walked the rest. Hustle for the B. and S., Jerry, if you don't want me on your hands with grip."

Mr. Biggs started for the door, but turned and crossed the room again. He then opened his mouth very wide, closed it with a snap suggestive of a spring-lock, and shook his head doubtfully.

"Eh?" said his guest. "Did you speak?"

"No," returned Jeremiah; "no, I did n't speak. I hope we can make you comfortable, Mr. Richard. I have n't forgotten the amount of soda you like, sir, and I think you'll find my Martinis the same as ever."

"No doubt, Jerry. But look sharp, will you?"

Jerry withdrew, and immediately his guest walked to the window, gazing into the gathering darkness with troubled eyes.

"What a night!" he exclaimed. "God! What a night! And what a fool I've been—what a fool I am!"

Meanwhile, in the little room above, a girl stood before the mirror, combing out her hair. It was long and thick, and it glistened as only hair with rather more than a touch of red in it can glisten. She held the shimmering mass in her hand, looking at it critically before braiding it into two braids that fell far below her waist, and from which little tendrils escaped and curled distractingly.

A heap of wet and crumpled garments lay upon the floor, but she was arrayed in clothing that suggested Mrs. Biggs as indisputably as the two mud-covered little shoes upon the chair testified to the youth and slinness of the feet that had worn them.

"I think," she remarked, having wearied of the mirror, "I'll go downstairs and sit by the fire."

She took one more look at the short black skirt that encircled her waist twice and was several inches from the ground notwithstanding, then she laughed appreciatively and started downstairs. When

she had almost reached the fireplace, the man at the window turned and came forward, slowly at first, then eagerly, with outstretched hands. The girl hesitated an instant.

"Dick!" she said. "Dick!"

In the kitchen Mr. Biggs exchanged a few hasty words with Mrs. Biggs, as she saw to the supper.

"He says he started up the mountain in an automobile," concluded Jeremiah, "over them rocks and wash-outs! What d' you think of that? And he upset, so he says. And walked over here, so he says, leavin' the machine in the gully. And he wants to stay here all night."

"She says she went to ride in the new trolley," returned Mrs. Biggs, "and suthin' went wrong and the car stopped. They set there so long, she says, that she got tired, and so she got out to walk a bit and stretch her legs, and the fust thing she knowed it was rainin' and the car gone. What d' you think of *that*? She's got on my best black silk, and she wants to stay all night."

Outside, the rain fell with increased violence, splashing noisily against the windows as the wind swept through the clove. Inside, the fire burned cheerfully, sending forth little flickering lights and even penetrating into dark corners with its ruddy glow.

The two who sat beside it drew their chairs nearer to the fender as the windows rattled in response to the blast, and talked in low voices, as people talk who have something to discuss concerning themselves alone. So the time passed, and after a while Richard Archer rose and paced the room with quick, impatient steps. At last he paused, his hand upon her chair, and spoke earnestly.

"Oh, Dick," she said, "we mustn't!"

"We mustn't, but we do. What, then?"

He was leaning over her now, with his lips close to her ear. The girl, looking up at him, saw his eyes dilate, felt his breath upon her cheek, and rose uncertainly. This much she remembered, and no more, for Archer took her in his arms and kissed her hair, her brow, her lips.

The wind swirled through the clove, shrieking a warning, but they did not hear it. The window rattled apprehensively, but they would not listen, for a fire within them was alight now and burning brightly.

Retribution is the ghost of indiscretion. Perhaps this is as it should be, for otherwise what possible inducement could the straight and narrow path present?

Nevertheless, it did seem a pity that Fate selected that particular moment to send the host and the hostess of the Little Lodge into the hall, there to pause and look incredulously, with silent but expressive

pantomime. Fate also brought two rain-soaked travellers to the window, lured thither by the promise of warmth and light within.

When Billy Barlow started to walk from Mountain Top to Glen Summit, he ignored the heavy clouds, because he preferred to believe that the sun was shining. Billy generally believed what he wanted to, regardless of indications to the contrary. He said it was a very comfortable way of getting through the world.

Therefore he not only set jauntily forth himself, but he also forced Randolph Searle to accompany him. Searle was not blessed with the optimistic nature that makes the best of things, and when the chilly drizzle settled down into a hard rain, he turned up his coat-collar and swore audibly.

It grows dark early in October, even under the most favorable conditions. When the sky is dull and leaden at noon, and the rain descends in a thick sheet a few hours later, one may expect to pick one's way carefully at five o'clock, and to grope helplessly at six.

The two men plodded on with dogged persistence, occasionally pausing to strike a match and make sure they were still in the path, until by common consent they acknowledged themselves to be lost.

"Of all fool things," observed Searle, "this is the fooliest. Whoever heard of walking miles over the mountain in a driving rain?"

"If that is how you feel about it," returned Billy, "why did you come? Nobody made you."

Searle caught his foot in a projecting root, fell headlong into the wet red shale, and groped for his hat. He said afterward that there are times when the English language is entirely inadequate.

Perhaps it was as well that just then they discovered themselves to be in front of the Little Lodge; otherwise the friendship of years might have suffered dissolution. Simultaneously they approached the window and looked in.

The room was bright with the light of the blazing logs that filled the great stone fireplace. A girl sat before it, and a man leaned over her, talking earnestly. Her back was toward the window, and only the gleam of burnished hair and the rounded contour of a cheek were visible from without. The man's profile, however, was sharply silhouetted, and Billy whistled softly.

"Archer!" he exclaimed. "Archer and—a-a-h!"

The two before the fire gazed at each other in breathless silence. The two before the window gazed also, but not at each other.

"I think," remarked Billy at last, "that we'd better push on, Randolph. I would n't like to embarrass 'em, don't you know. Good fellow, Archer—awfully good fellow. Let's go on, Randolph."

Searle, however, was wet and cold, and disinclined to charity.

"I'm going in," he announced. "I'd go in if it were King

George himself, or Anthony Comstock and Carrie Nation. They can look out for themselves."

"Have the decency to knock," murmured Billy, following him to the door. "Knock loud, Searle."

Searle knocked loud the first time, and louder still the second. His third and loudest effort brought Jeremiah to the door, candle in hand. Mr. Biggs invited them to enter.

"I'm sure I hope you'll excuse the delay," he remarked, "but the truth is, we was all asleep—not expecting any one to be out this bad night. I hope you've not been knocking long."

"Only a half-hour or so," returned Searle. "You say nobody else is here?"

"No, sir," returned Jeremiah. "No, sir."

Searle glanced toward the coat-rack, and Mr. Biggs's eyes followed his until they rested on the mackintosh and the hat spread out to dry. Jerry straightened a fold of the mackintosh and brushed the hat.

"No, sir," he continued; "nobody but yourselves, excepting Mr. Archer. He's here, too."

Barlow said afterward that Jeremiah Biggs proved he could be sublime when the occasion demanded it, but Searle replied that in his opinion "sublime" was not a suitable word.

"I suppose," ventured Barlow, when Jerry had accommodated them with two small glasses, "Mr. Archer has retired?"

"Oh, yes, sir, long ago," replied Mr. Biggs. "He was that done up, he could hardly eat his supper, and——"

Jeremiah paused suddenly as the hall door trembled under a thunderous demand for admission.

"Somebody a-knocking," he remarked, hastening to obey the summons.

The last arrival was arrayed in riding-dress, once immaculate, but now well splashed with mud. Two facts were evident at the first glance: one that he was wet to the skin, and the other that his temper as well as his clothes had suffered during his journey.

Jeremiah proffered the hospitality of the house, and offered his already depleted wardrobe.

"See to the horse," commanded the guest, accepting these civilities as a matter of course. "He is dead beat, and so am I."

"Jim Gordon!" exclaimed Barlow. "Now, what the—— Ah, Gordon, how are you? Did n't expect to meet us here, did you?"

"How are you, Barlow? And Searle, too! No, I did not expect to meet any one. To be frank, I thought nobody else would be fool enough to be out."

He advanced to the fire and stood before it, frowning heavily.

"It is a pity," remarked Searle, "that Archer has turned in. We would be just enough for a little game, but as it is——"

"Archer!" exclaimed Gordon. "What is he doing here?"

"Stormbound, like the rest of us. The Little Lodge is a regular Noah's Ark to-night to rescue drowning animals."

Gordon walked to the window and looked out into the night. He stood there for some minutes, lost in thought; then he returned to the fire and yawned exhaustively.

"Well," he remarked, "I'll say good-night. Bed seems about the best thing going just now."

After the guests had retired and the lights were out, Mr. and Mrs. Biggs held troubled counsel in the privacy of their own apartment. The evening had been a bewildering one to them, and their house was taxed to the utmost, since it was but a wayside hostelry and no one was expected to stop overnight.

They referred to the tableau before the fire, and mentioned conclusions drawn therefrom.

"I would n't have believed it if I had n't seen it with my own eyes," said Mrs. Biggs, rolling up a scant gray lock in yellow paper. "It's downright scan'lous, that's what it is."

"The minute she come in," said Jerry, "I knowed something was up. The minute *he* come in, I knowed what it was."

"What are you going to do about it?" inquired his wife.

"Do!" returned Jerry. "*Do!* Why, I'm going to stand by Mr. Richard, that's what I'm going to do, and say nothin' to nobody. Ain't I knowed him from a lad? Don't he understand what's the proper thing to do for them as stands by him? He ain't the first man to be led off by a pretty face—no, nor he won't be the last."

"Led off, indeed!" interrupted Mrs. Biggs. "If that ain't fur all the world like a man! From Adam down, they're all the same—shifitin' the blame on the woman! Don't come to me, Jerry Biggs, with your '*led offs*,' for I won't have it."

"Have it your own way, then," retorted Jerry. "He was n't led off. But he's here, and she's here. And them three others is here. Now, supposing—jest *supposing*—that things don't go right. There's nothing so contrairy as things is sometimes. What, then?"

"Whatever happens," affirmed Mrs. Biggs, "I never seen nothing. I'll swear to that, and take my chances at hell and damnation. For," she continued thoughtfully, "I ain't noways sure about them things, any way."

"Mebbe you're right," returned Jerry. "Mind, I don't admit it, but mebbe you are. Anyhow, we'll stand by Mr. Archer, and mebbe next spring we'll build that south wing we want so bad."

Mrs. Biggs went to the window and flattened her nose against the glass.

"It's a wild storm," she said. "Them that is abroad on the mountain to-night needs the prayers of them that ain't."

Whereupon they pulled down the shade and went comfortably to bed.

III.

It was a wild night. The rain fell ceaselessly, and the wind shrieked through the clove, twisting giant trees about at its pleasure and leaving them lying broken and humiliated to mark its path. The Little Lodge was firmly built, yet to-night it shook upon its foundations as if helpless and afraid.

Further down the mountain, a house not so securely constructed trembled also. Its rough log walls offered but inadequate protection, for chill blasts crept through the interstices and even took liberties with the fire upon the hearth. It was a feeble fire, too, although there was wood in plenty to be had for chopping, and it smoked sullenly, as though resenting its inadequate replenishing.

On one side of the hearth sat a man, dirty and long unshaven. The clay pipe in his mouth smoked in opposition to the fire, and his bushy brows overhung small brown eyes set very close together. Facing him sat a woman, dirty also and apparently accustomed to it. Loosely piled upon her head was a tangled mass of faded yellow hair, and even through the hopeless inertia of the slattern, one could detect traces of former beauty.

After a while she got up and walked listlessly to the window. But one pane of glass was intact, the others being supplemented by old hats or anything available. On this she breathed, wiped it with her sleeve, and peered out into the darkness. The man watched her intently. Suddenly he took his pipe from his mouth and spoke, or rather snarled.

"Come back!"

She came at once, with the slinking obedience of an ill-used dog.

"I was lookin' at the storm," she said, "that's all, Israel."

"You lie! You was lookin' for *her*!"

She shrank into her chair as he resumed his pipe, his teeth closing upon the steam so sharply that the clay parted and the bowl fell upon the floor. He gathered the fragments together and flung them into the ashes without a word, and for a long time there was silence while he sat motionless and the woman shivered now and then as the blast grew fiercer.

At last he spoke.

"We've been married twenty year, you and me."

"Twenty year, come Christmas," she echoed.

"And we've had two children."

"Two babies," she agreed: "him—and her."

"The boy, he up and died when he was a little feller."

"Yes, he died. It was winter, and he had the fever. He did n't have no doctor, so he died."

She made the statement calmly and without emotion. Evidently it was a recognized fact and not worth discussing.

"The girl——" He paused, then continued grimly: "The girl, she growed up. I reckon she was handsome."

"You *know* she was handsome, Israel. There was n't such a girl on the mountain."

"Aye, she was handsome—worse luck. And she knowed it. And she used her big eyes, and smiled to show her dimples and white teeth. And she brushed her red hair till it glittered in the sunshine, because *he* told her it was pretty. Better that a poor girl should have a hump on her back than be handsome!"

The mother made no response, and he continued, speaking bitterly:

"Aye, she was handsome. Empty-headed and vain as they make 'em. And she hung about the hotels and heard what the fools there said about her."

"Who sent her?"

It was the mother's first attempt at defense, and she spoke in a shrill, hurried voice, as though impelled against her will.

"Yes, who sent her with birch-bark frames to sell, when she was a little, barefoot girl? When she got older and could make frames and boxes for herself, who liked the money she got? Was it you or me?"

He stared at her in astonishment, and she resumed, folding her arms on her breast and rocking to and fro.

"Was n't it to be expected? Her so handsome everybody was talkin' about her! Much you cared, so long as she brought you her money! When she kep' it herself, you cussed her. Look at this cabin—is it a fit home for a girl? Look at me and you! Could she love *us* and be proud of *us*?"

Her voice had risen almost to a shriek, and her husband continued to stare at her dumb with surprise.

"I've kep' quiet all these years, and now I'm goin' to speak. No, I ain't afraid no more. She's gone—Bess has gone—and I don't blame her. Do you hear me, Israel English? I'm a woman—I'm her mother—and *I don't blame her.*"

"You're crazy," he said; "gone plumb daffy."

"No, I ain't, Israel; no, I ain't. But I'm nigh it to-night. You and me, we had a girl-child, and she run the mountains same as the squirrels do. She growed into somethin' uncommon, and men

seen her. She liked 'em—why should n't she? She seen women, too, at the hotels—different from her, different from me. She knowed it was money made 'em so, and she wanted it. Why should n't she want it? Now she's gone—Bess has gone."

"Who has she gone with?"

He asked the question abruptly, and she covered her face with her hands as she replied:

"I don't know, Israel, I don't know. She never told me nothing, Bess did n't. There was men in plenty, but there was two in particular. Maybe he'll marry her, whichever he is."

"You're a fool, Cynthia; you always was"—he made the statement impartially. "Men like him don't marry girls like her. After awhile he'll git tired of her, and then she'll come back to the cabin and whine to git in. But the door's shut—do you hear me, woman? You and me, we had two children, him and her. Now we ain't got none."

She made no reply, but her breath came in labored gasps as he continued:

"You go and pick up her duds and fetch 'em here. Go, I say."

She went with lagging step. The habit of obedience is strong, and the fire of rebellion burns with but a fitful flame at first, even though kindled by resentment. After a while she returned with a heterogeneous mass of clothing, bits of ribbon, and other odds and ends jumbled together upon an old sheet.

"That's all," she said. "She had n't much, Bess had n't."

He bent his frowning gaze upon the sheet, and, stooping suddenly, clutched a bit of blue ribbon. Twisted about it was a slender gold chain, terminating in a heart-shaped locket, whose gleam caught his eye as it lay on the floor. He dragged fiercely at the chain until it was disentangled, and held it suspended from his finger, while the locket swung to and fro like a pendulum.

"Gold!" he said. "Gold! What's it doing in this shanty?"

It looked out of place indeed compared with the hand that held it.

"Gold!" he repeated. "Gold! And us with not a rag to our backs! Oh, she had her ribbons, and her fine stockings, and her brown kid shoes with bows on 'em—did n't I see 'em? Where'd she git 'em? Answer me, woman! Where did she git 'em?"

With a contemptuous gesture, he flung the chain back into the mass at his feet, and tied the corners of the sheet together in hard, vindictive knots. The bundle completed, he raised it to his shoulder and went to the door, his wife following closely.

"What you goin' to do?" she whispered.

"We ain't got no room for trash," he answered. "I'm goin' to tote it to Table Rock and drop it off."

"Not to-night, Israel. Hear the wind."

"Git back," he commanded. "I've lived on this mountain all my life, and I never seen the storm I could n't weather. Git back, I say."

He passed out, closing the door with difficulty, and she returned to the chair beside the hearth with her usual listless step.

Moment followed moment in monotonous succession, as the fire faded into embers, and the embers crumbled into ashes. The night passed, and the storm raged itself into silence; but the slatternly figure crouched motionless, the head with its unkempt mass of hair buried in hands certainly not intimate with soap and water.

When the gray light of approaching dawn filled the room, the woman raised her head, disclosing a face gray also, and drawn with suffering.

The empty chair across the hearth confronted her, and, rising, she stood before it, breathing hard. At last she spoke, addressing it directly and raising an accusing hand that shook uncontrollably.

"Twenty year," she said, "twenty year. And had two babies, him and her. He up and died, but she's alive to-night,—and she's mine."

IV.

THE gray of the eastern sky was streaked with pink, which in turn was replaced by a light that gilded the mountain until the wet logs of the English cabin sparkled as if encrusted with jewels. For the sun had risen, and shone as though the preceding night were a joke and should be laughed into oblivion.

Billy Barlow, standing by the window of the Little Lodge, laughed also, and turned to his companion.

"Searle," he said, "did you and I stand outside that window last night and see things, or did I dream it?"

"No," replied Searle; "you did n't dream it. Have you seen Archer?"

"Yes, and you?"

"I met him on the stairs. He'll breakfast with us. Gordon will also join us."

Billy thrust his hands in his pockets and chuckled softly.

"I wonder what brought Gordon out. Did you notice, Searle, that he was in a beastly temper? Mighty ugly look he has around the mouth sometimes. Something must have gone wrong last night,—*cherchez la femme*."

Searle nodded.

"I like Archer better myself," he remarked. "Never could understand why Miss Carrington chucked him. They were engaged a year

ago, and now she's going to marry Gordon in December. Is Archer staying at the Reyburns'?"

"Not this time. He never was popular with the old lady, though, being the Bishop's nephew, he was at the house a good deal. Peggy is Mrs. Reyburn's niece, and lives there, so they were a lot together, with the usual result,—propinquity, you know."

"Well," said Searle, "I can't understand why, after all, she is now going to marry Jim Gordon. And I can't understand what we saw last night, either."

"Nor I. But there are lots of things I don't try to understand, and last night's one of 'em. Now, if it had been you, Randolph, and a fair unknown——"

"Hush!" interrupted Searle. "Gordon's coming."

Jim Gordon, well brushed, rested, and refreshed, was a type of prosperous young American. He was pleasant enough to look upon, although his narrow eyes were set very close together, and his handsome, clean-shaved face was somewhat hard when in repose. These were minor details, however, and not a few girls watched ball-room doors anxiously until he appeared, for his step was perfection and his manners all that could be desired.

There was a sullen curve to his lips this morning, and, although he returned their greetings civilly enough, he made but scant response to the glittering generalities with which Billy strove to fill in the time. The simultaneous appearance of Archer and breakfast was a welcome interruption, and the four men applied themselves to the business in hand with silent assiduity. In fact, the waiter told Mrs. Biggs, when he went for fresh supplies, that in all his experience he had never seen gentlemen eat more and say less.

"I wonder," speculated Billy, as he finished his coffee, "whether the boy ever got my boots clean. If so, he's earned his tip, but I'd like to have them. Mr. Biggs's brogans are not exactly to my taste. You grabbed the slippers, Archer, being the first arrival. What time did you get here?"

"Just about dark."

"A fire and a roof that did not leak were mighty acceptable last night," said Barlow. "I know they looked good to me. Ah! Behold the boots!"

A small and very grimy urchin deposited a heap of brightly polished boots upon the hearth, and collected his tips with a widening smile.

"They's all tans and all alike," he remarked before he retired, "and I dunno which is which. Reckon you kin sort 'em out to suit yourselves. Thank ye kindly, sirs. Hope I may shine ye up agin some time."

"I know mine by intuition," said Billy, selecting them. "The riding boots are Gordon's, of course. These are Randolph's—I know 'em by the slight impression of the bunion he tries to ignore. Therefore, my Sherlock Holmes astuteness tells me the remaining pair are Archer's. Gentlemen, the distribution is now—eh?"

The words died upon his lips, and he rubbed his eyes and stared at the hearth. It was a very ordinary large stone fireplace, yet four men, each with brown boots dangling from his hand, stood and gazed at it speechless and incredulous. Alone upon the hearth stood another shoe—brown also, and astonishingly small by contrast.

Into the eloquent silence penetrated the voice of Mrs. Biggs, raised in shrill expostulation.

"What'd you do with it, you little imp? Did n't I tell you most particular not to mix 'em up? Of all good for nothing, stupid, lazy boys——"

"Archer," remarked Billy, recovering himself, "Mrs. Biggs seems to have lost her shoe."

Gordon stooped and raised the little shoe by its brown ribbon, holding it aloft and twirling it daintily. His eyebrows were raised in interrogation, and his lip curled with amusement.

"Yes, Archer," he said; "*Mrs. Biggs* has lost her shoe."

One pair of boots fell to the floor with a crash, as Archer darted forward with clenched hands and white lips. Gordon faced him with a careless laugh.

"Well," he said, "has n't she?"

"My dear fellows," interposed Searle, with his slight drawl, "why this excitement? Very stupid in the boy, of course, and Mrs. Biggs is justly annoyed; but why agitate yourselves? Gordon, allow me to return her property to the lady and relieve her anxiety."

They watched Searle retreat, shoe in hand, and Billy broke the silence with his light laugh.

"You're riding, Gordon, I know, so it's no use to ask you to join us. We are going to keep on to Glen Summit, Archer, and we're starting immediately. You'll go along, old fellow, won't you?"

"No," said Archer slowly. "Thank you, Billy, but I cannot join you. I'm due elsewhere."

V.

BISHOP RYBURN once remarked to his nephew that he had bought his summer home chiefly because of the view from the dining-room windows. Archer replied that under those circumstances it seemed a pity there should so often be a blot on the landscape, and declined to pursue the subject.

The Bishop sometimes recalled this conversation, especially during

breakfast. To be sure, the table was bountifully spread, cozily round, and glittering with glass and silver. Directly opposite him a large double window framed his favorite bit of the clove, with the mountains rising sublimely on either side, and the far-away glimpse of the river that glistened when the sun touched it. From his seat at table the Bishop had only to raise his eyes to look at this picture, but they invariably encountered his Julia en route, who remained a fixture in the foreground.

Had one been privileged to look in at the window on a certain bright morning two days after the storm, the back of Mrs. Reyburn's head would have immediately conveyed the information that an argument was in progress, and that the lady meant to stand her ground. An open letter lay beside the Bishop's plate, and evidently formed the basis of the trouble. A letter also lay beside the third place at the round table, which was as yet vacant.

"No, Edward," said Mrs. Reyburn, chipping her egg daintily; "it is not worth while to discuss the matter."

The Bishop swallowed a sigh with his coffee. He avoided discussion when possible.

"Of course," she resumed, "this is your house, and I am your wife. If you insist upon allowing him to come here, I must submit. I never forget my marriage vow of obedience, painful as my duty sometimes is."

"My dear," interrupted the Bishop, "I would not willingly cause you pain."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Edward."

"Nevertheless, Dick is my sister's boy, and I cannot close my doors against him without good reason. Where did you hear this extraordinary story, Julia?"

Mrs. Reyburn was a victim to indigestion and twice-baked bread. She broke off a bit, and the Bishop possessed his soul in patience, thinking vaguely, as he heard it crunch, of the poor ground down by the oppressor.

"Everybody is talking about it, Edward," she finally replied. "Mary Gordon says the toast at the Country Club is now 'The little brown shoe.'"

"Mary Gordon, indeed! And how does she know?"

"You always take that tone when I mention Mary. I am sure she is a very superior woman and does a great deal of church work. Of course she heard it from her husband. Jim Gordon was there, and he told his brother all about it."

"Of course," she continued, "it is a painful subject to you. I can understand that perfectly. But we must look these things in the face, as I'm sure I've heard you say in the pulpit, Edward. This

unfortunate girl, Bessie English, has disappeared, as I have just been telling you. Now, we all know that Richard——”

“My dear Julia!”

Mrs. Reyburn dabbed at her eyes with a stiffly starched handkerchief.

“I would n’t for worlds hurt anybody’s feelings, Edward, and there is *nobody* more careful about making unjust accusations than I. But why should Richard have been embarrassed about the shoe? The other men——”

“He will tell us,” interrupted the Bishop. “Dick will explain how he happened to be out on the mountain that night.”

“I hope so, I’m sure.”

Mrs. Reyburn’s manner conveyed the impression that the hope was a vain one, and her husband sought to creat a digression.

“But about the English family,” he said—“this seems very sad to me. Is the man fatally injured? Just how did it happen?”

“They were always a blot on the community, Edward. The girl has merely done what might have been expected, and for my part, I should be glad she had gone if she did not involve—well, *others*, in her disgrace. I don’t know, I’m sure, why Israel English went to Table Rock night before last, but a falling tree struck him, and of course he is fatally injured.”

“They must be in need of help, Julia. We must do what we can.”

“Yes,” agreed Mrs. Reyburn; “I was never one to shirk my duty—my worst enemy cannot accuse me of *that*. I will go and see Cynthia English this afternoon, although her shiftlessness drives me distracted. It is fortunate I don’t expect gratitude, for I certainly won’t get it. However, I will go.”

“Bessie English,” moralized the Bishop, “poor, misguided, pretty Bessie. After all, Julia, I don’t know that she was so much to blame. She did n’t have a fair chance, and I hope the apples of Sodom may not prove too bitter.”

“Dear me, Edward! What sentiments for a clergyman!”

“She was just about Peggy’s age,” he continued, unheeding, “and not unlike her, either, poor child!”

“*Really*, Edward, I don’t think it necessary to compare Margaret and Bessie English. However, that reminds me of what I was going to say when you interrupted. Richard is your nephew, of course, and if I had only myself to consider, I should make a point of receiving him as usual, distasteful as it would be to me. But there is Margaret. A girl in the house is a great responsibility, and of course I owe a duty to my own niece.”

“But, still, I don’t see——”

“You never do see things, Edward. You go through life with

your head so high in the clouds, you walk straight into puddles and never know it."

The Bishop was guiltily conscious that this was true. He had very recently allowed himself to be buncoed by a hard-luck story, and his bank-account had suffered accordingly.

"Peggy always liked Dick," remarked the Bishop. "I have sometimes thought she regretted——"

He paused as the dining-room door opened and a rustle of skirts announced the coming woman.

A girl of twenty, fresh and sweet as a girl should be, with a rather wide, red-lipped mouth, and gray eyes heavily fringed with black—eyes that looked directly at one, and challenged directness in return. Her hair was knotted low on her neck, and rippled softly from her white brow in big waves and little curling tendrils. Miss Carrington's friends stoutly maintained that her hair was richly auburn, but her enemies referred to it as red.

"What about Peggy?" she demanded, taking the vacant seat. "What were you saying about me, Uncle?"

"I was merely remarking, my dear, that I thought you still liked Dick."

Peggy's face flamed suddenly scarlet, and she salted her cereal recklessly.

"Dick is at Glen Summit," continued the Bishop. "He wants to pay us a short visit. We'd be glad to see him, eh, Peggy?"

Silence on the part of Peggy, and frigid disapproval emanating from Mrs. Reyburn.

"He has not been here since he returned from Europe," pursued the Bishop, undaunted, "so he naturally wants to come. When did you see him last, Peggy?"

"We said good-by to him together, Uncle Edward."

Peggy's pause before replying was scarcely perceptible.

"Well," said Mrs. Reyburn, with an air of finality, "next week is out of the question, for the house will be full. We will resume our discussion at another time, Edward."

The Bishop was crestfallen and disappointed. He was accustomed to being ably seconded by Peggy on the rare occasions when he asserted his prerogative as head of the house, and her silence puzzled him.

Then, too, he was more troubled than he cared to admit by the story served with his breakfast, well spiced with comments and darkened by prognostications as to the future. The childless man had watched his nephew's growth and development with keen interest, and a camaraderie existed between them in which both took silent comfort.

Therefore, he did not enjoy his walk about the garden, and thought

the chrysanthemums decidedly blighted by the heavy frost, although the gardener assured him they were really much finer than usual. The Bishop deserted the chrysanthemums and decided to go up the mountain, this being his panacea for all mental disquiet.

He chose an unfrequented path, where climbing was difficult, and became absorbed in the ascent. So much so, indeed, that when he paused to rest before the final pull he found himself humming "On Jordan's Stormy Banks We Stand," a sure indication that he was fast regaining his usual poise. This habit of humming greatly annoyed Mrs. Reyburn, who often remarked that where the Lord had not seen fit to bestow a voice, singing was certainly not expected.

The Bishop loved the steep little path whose objective point was a flat-topped rock, where one looked down upon the world, and where even the carnally minded forgot for a time the flesh and the devil. He sat down upon a narrow ledge, and looked affectionately up at the grim gray rock projecting from the side of the mountain. It suggested the remorselessness of fate, he thought, but it also typified immortality.

The rock was not just as usual to-day. Something small and white clung to it, evidently caught on a rough edge or slight projection. Now and then it moved a little, as the wings of a moth flutter before settling into everlasting stillness. At last a little gust of wind loosened it entirely, and for a moment it floated in mid air, its course uncertain, then slowly descended and landed upon the ledge beside the Bishop. Mechanically he picked it up and examined it. It proved to be a man's handkerchief, with initials embroidered in the corner.

"R. A.," he deciphered. "R. A."

Folding the handkerchief carefully, he placed it in his pocket and rose to continue his walk. Then he paused a moment, and looked at Table Rock, now without any incongruous white patch.

"R. A.," he repeated. "Richard Archer."

He resumed his ascent, and finally emerged, breathless but triumphant. Table Rock was Bishop Reyburn's refuge in perturbed moments, as well as his favorite retreat when all was well in the world, so far as he knew. He came there once, and often twice, a day, and he knew every stick and stone upon it intimately. So he seated himself upon his favorite boulder and looked out into the horizon, with the manner of one who knows the pleasure in store for him. But to-day the view was not entirely satisfying. Somewhere, thought the Bishop, there was a jarring note, and he looked about to locate it.

Half way down the ravine a dead tree abutted abruptly. Its bare branches were sharply defined against the deep blue of the sky, and from the longest hung a huddle. It was shapeless and bulky, but,

nevertheless, it swung to and fro in the breeze as lightly as a stout woman dances. A line appeared upon the Bishop's forehead as he watched it. Somehow, the earth did not seem as far away as usual this morning.

But by and by the line smoothed itself away, and a great contentment replaced the worried look in his eyes; for the Bishop's head was in the clouds, as usual, and the world and all that in it lay had retreated very far beneath him.

IV.

LATE that same afternoon Mrs. Reyburn stood at the door of the English cabin. She had not crossed the threshold, because it was occupied by Mrs. English, who had omitted to invite her to do so.

She had come to proffer the sympathy and assistance that in her position as wife of the Bishop she felt it her duty to bestow, but she had received little encouragement, and was now about to retreat with a consciousness of defeat somewhat galling to one of her disposition.

Inside the cabin Israel English, now merely an inert, breathing bulk, lay upon a cot. His eyes roved ceaselessly under their bushy brows, but he lay motionless and in silence. He had lain thus ever since he had been carried home the morning after the storm, and his wife had tended him, saying little, and receiving all offers of assistance with her usual dull apathy.

"If there is anything you need," said Mrs. Reyburn, "you must be sure and let us know."

"Thank you kindly," returned Mrs. English, "but we don't need nothing."

The Bishop's wife was baffled. The wretched cabin, with its shiftless environments, suggested hopeless poverty and cried aloud for assistance, yet the chief sufferer declined to be helped. Therefore, decided Mrs. Reyburn, it was useless to waste time in further parley. So she walked away with dignity, holding her skirts carefully from contact with the ground, and stepping cautiously over the sticks and stones in the rough path.

Cynthia English watched the retreating figure until it disappeared, then she turned and entered the cabin. She did not glance at the helpless form upon the cot, but set about warming some gruel in a tin saucepan. As she stirred it, she muttered now and then, and once she raised her right hand, as if taking an oath.

Finally she poured some of the gruel into a cup and held it to her husband's lips, performing this service in the detached, impersonal manner with which one might replenish a fire or pour water into a pail.

He drank thirstily, draining the cup and motioning for more, but she shook her head.

"It's got to *last*," she said, "that broth has. We ain't got chickens enough to spare one every day, and we ain't up for charity—yet."

She washed the cup with unwonted care, and set it on the table. Then she spoke again.

"I'm goin' out."

His eyes questioned her.

"Up the mountain."

Again the wordless inquiry.

"Because I *choose*. Now you know, Israel. I'm goin' out because I want to go. 'T ain't likely anybody'll be here now. Seems as if the whole place has been a'ready. Anyhow, I'm goin'."

And she went, without a backward glance.

The sun was setting, disappearing slowly, as if loath to leave the world to darkness, and making many promises for a fair to-morrow.

Cynthia shaded her eyes with her hand and looked at it. How many, many times had she watched it drop behind the mountain that was the boundary of her world, and beyond which she had never penetrated! Quite suddenly she remembered an evening like this when she had stood in the same place with a little barefoot, red-haired girl beside her.

"Mother," the child had said, "what's *yonder*, where the sun goes every night?"

She recalled her own evasive reply. She herself had never been "yonder," and knew nothing whatever about it. Nor had she then been able to understand the petulant tone in which Bess spoke next, and the light that gleamed in her eyes.

"I hate it so," she had cried, "that ugly old mountain right in front of us! I'd like to push it away, so I would, and when I'm a big woman I'll do it."

Mrs. English caught her breath sharply and resumed her walk. The desire to push away the mountain was strong within her also to-night, for perhaps beyond it she might find her little red-haired girl.

The narrow path turned abruptly, and she followed it. She did not understand where she was going, nor why she came, but she vaguely remembered standing in the cabin door and watching a slight young figure disappear around the turn. At the time, she had been but faintly interested, for Bess was much given to twilight rambles as well as moonlight ones, and seldom thought it worth her while to mention where she had been. Now, however, with her torpid senses at last awakened, the mother realized many things, and fear of the unknown beyond the mountain clutched tightly at her heart.

It was a lonely little path, winding its way through the woods

and bringing up uncompromisingly against the trunk of a birch. Upon the smooth bark the word "Bessie" was deeply cut, and Cynthia paused, gazing with incredulous eyes. At last she advanced a tentative finger and traced each letter from beginning to end. Evidently they had been cut recently, for they shone white, except where the rays of the setting sun touched them and turned them to scarlet.

On the other side of the tree the path forked suddenly. One branch led up the mountain to Table Rock; the other descended with dangerous steepness to a ravine far below the rock, where a stream rippled noisily along its pebbly bed.

Mrs. English chose the lower path, although there was every evidence that the upper one had been more recently traversed. The lower, indeed, was so choked by underbrush that walking was difficult, but she kept blindly on. Brambles caught at her limp cotton skirt, but she tore it away regardless of the ensuing rents. Branches lay in her way, but she pushed them aside and walked on with feverish haste. Once she stumbled and fell, and once she paused, looking furtively behind her, as if fearing pursuit.

Only the squirrels, however, shared the little path with her, and they were content to watch her from the trees where they scampered at her approach. So Cynthia went on, obeying a resistless impulse, while her heart beat with painful, irregular throbs.

At last she reached the ravine at the end of the path. High above her Table Rock abutted abruptly from the mountain, showing grim and black against the gold of the western sky. But Mrs. English did not look at it, for below, in the ravine, lay a figure inert and motionless. The face was hidden, but two long burnished braids caught the rays of the setting sun. Cynthia sank upon her knees, gathering the crushed form close to her breast, and murmuring inarticulate endearments, as though to a helpless baby. For she had found her little red-haired girl on this side of the mountain.

When the sun had set, and the gold of the west was fading into gray, Bishop Reyburn, who stood bareheaded on Table Rock, replaced his hat and turned to go home. He liked to be alone at the close of the day, and he always uncovered his head to the passing of the sun, feeling that then the Gates of Heaven are ajar and that the illuminated sky is but a dim reflection of the glory within.

As he looked down into the ravine, he again perceived the bundle which had blotted the landscape that morning. It was still swinging back and forth on the limb of the dead oak, but the wind had loosened the knots, evidently, for one end of the sheet hung down and a garment fluttered from the aperture, taking grotesque and ludicrous forms as the breeze freshened.

The Bishop frowned. He did not like his landscape interfered with, and he decided to go home by way of the ravine and see if it could not be removed.

"For," he reflected, "there is no use in being annoyed when it can be avoided."

With some difficulty, he managed to descend the steep, unfrequented path, and finally arrived at his objective point. Much to his satisfaction, he found he could reach the bundle with his cane and so dislodge it. He meant to hook it on the crooked end of his walking-stick and withdraw it decorously from view, but he succeeded only in pushing it from the branch down into the ravine below. Craning his neck cautiously to learn its ultimate destination, he saw something else which transfixed him with horror.

It was Cynthia English, kneeling beside the stream and holding in her arms a figure whose rigidity told its own story. The bundle had fallen beside her, and it lay there quite unnoticed, with its contents scattered about the ground, the sheet having parted as it fell.

Passionately the woman kissed the unresponsive lips, and chafed the hands that no amount of rubbing could make warm and soft again. She laid the heavy head upon her breast, crooning over it with low, inarticulate words of endearment. She displayed no surprise when the Bishop reached her side, but merely looked at him with dull, lack-lustre eyes.

"She's dead," she said. "Bess is dead."

The Bishop wasted no time in words, but lifted the dead girl tenderly and laid her on a bed of leaves.

"Poor child!" he said. "She fell, I suppose—slipped and fell."

Cynthia straightened a fold in the wet skirt, and answered quietly:

"No, she did n't fall, Bess did n't. She knowed the mountain and the rocks—knowed 'em well. Bess could n't fall no more than a squirrel can fall."

She raised a braid of the shining hair and held it in her hand.

"It's pretty, ain't it?" she said, and smiled pitifully. "She was awful handsome, Bess was. And she did n't fall."

She gently released the braid and stood upright, her faded calico skirt clinging limply about her, and little wisps of hair falling over her face where the wind had loosened it. A sorry figure, certainly, yet not without a certain compelling force.

"I found her here," she said, "layin' dead, part in the water and part out. Don't ask me how she come here—ask *him*. Ask the man that done it."

The Bishop laid his hand gently on her shoulder.

"Mrs. English," he said, "come home. You are nervous and overwrought. Come home."

"Home?" she repeated. "Home? Yes, I'll go home to Israel. Home! Oh, my God!"

She turned as she spoke, and for the first time noticed the torn sheet, with its scattered contents, on the ground beside her.

"They're hers," she said—"her clothes that Israel threw away that night. It don't matter now. She don't need 'em."

She did not ask how they came to be there, or offer to touch them, but busied herself smoothing the burnished hair and softly patting the wet skirt. The girl lay quiet upon her bed of leaves, but the mother's restless hands passed continually from one part of her body to another.

"Where's her other shoe?" she inquired suddenly. "She ain't got on but one shoe. She must have 'em both."

It was quite true. One little foot wore a muddy brown shoe, with its ribbon still held in a coquettish bow. The other was encased in a stocking only, and Cynthia held it tenderly in her hand.

"Where's her other shoe?" she demanded; but the Bishop did not know. He could only shake his head sadly, and again entreat her to go home.

"I will go and get help," he said. "We must take Bessie home, Mrs. English."

It was growing dark rapidly in the ravine. A crescent moon was rising, and the stream rippling over the pebbles caught its light here and there. Something also glistened among the leaves and scattered garments on the bank of the stream, and the Bishop mechanically stooped to pick it up. It was the chain and locket Israel English had flung back into the bundle of clothing when he went out with it into the storm. Cynthia looked at it with indifference when it was laid before her.

"She don't want it no more, Bess don't," she said, and refused to touch it. The Bishop consigned it to his pocket for safe-keeping.

"Come," he said gently. "Come with me, Mrs. English."

But Cynthia again refused.

"No," she said; "no. You go for help if you want to—I don't care. She don't need help now. But I'll stay here with Bess. She's afraid of the dark."

And the Bishop, walking slowly, with bent head and shoulders a little bowed, went alone for help.

VII.

THERE is in society an important element called gossip. It occupies no recognized position, but, like many potent factors, prefers to remain unobtrusively in the background, whence it gets in its deadly work with consummate skill. If so intangible a thing is endowed with

shape, it may be said to resemble a circle, inasmuch as it has no beginning and no end.

Archer was aware of an undercurrent in the air. He felt it when he happened upon select little parties at the Country Club, and noted their expansive smiles fade with abrupt change of subject at his approach. Dropping in at the Gordons' for tea, the day after Bessie was found in the ravine, he encountered obvious embarrassment and wondered accordingly. But most of all he realized the undercurrent that afternoon, when he met his uncle's wife.

Mrs. Reyburn was enveloped in an atmosphere of disapproval and frigidity impossible to ignore. It exuded from her pores, as it were, and permeated the surrounding atmosphere until even ordinary small talk slowly congealed into frozen silence, and did not thaw until the disturbing element removed himself from her proximity, worsted and discomfited.

"Somehow," whispered Billy Barlow to Helen Gordon, who was pouring tea, "I always think of Roman matrons when I see Mrs. Reyburn. Perhaps it's her nose."

Nell flashed a glance of quick understanding from behind the brass samovar.

"I always want to acknowledge that I have done everything I ought not to have done, and," she added reflectively, "I'm usually anxious to impress upon her that I'm glad of it."

In Mrs. Reyburn's wake came Peggy. She responded politely to Archer's greeting, but her eyes steadfastly refused to meet his as they exchanged the customary platitudes, and she turned with obvious relief to Randolph Searle when he approached. Nell watched her curiously, and dispensed tea to Glen Summit, generally, in abstracted silence.

"And *such* tea, my dear!" whispered one matron to another. "The Russian method, you know. I cannot offer my friends anything to compare with it."

Billy caught the tea-maker's eye and laughed outright. The lady in question did not often offer her friends anything but a chair.

"Dear!" the first matron continued. "Is that Dick Archer?"

"Yes. Why not?"

"Oh, have n't you heard? Well, you know the night of the storm——"

Then followed the story of the Little Lodge, so highly spiced and gaudily colored that Barlow gasped helplessly as he listened. The girl behind the samovar listened also, breathless and absorbed.

"Indeed!" said the listening matron. "*In-deed!* And who was—eh?"

"It is n't definitely known yet, but such things always come

out sooner or later. And, really, there is little doubt about it. That unfortunate girl!"

"Her death was tragic. I suppose she slipped and fell from Table Rock down into the ravine."

"I suppose so, but it's best not to inquire too deeply into such matters. Anyhow, she is better out of the way, and for the sake of all concerned I sincerely hope that there will be no investigation. Only one shoe on, my dear! The Bishop's nephew, too! I feel for the Bishop."

She felt for her gloves at the same time, and the two ladies sought other fields. Nell flung a defiant glance at their retreating backs.

"Cats!" she said. "Spiteful old cats!"

"You are speaking of your mother's guests, you know," remarked Billy—"most estimable ladies."

"One of them is my sister-in-law, Mary Gordon. She's *too* estimable for my taste, just as her preserves are too sweet. Isn't Peggy stunning in that gown?"

Peggy, hearing her name, turned and smiled at her friend. She was standing at the entrance to a small conservatory, with Jim Gordon holding aside the curtain for her to enter. They made an effective picture, and Nell waved her hand appreciatively as they vanished.

"It's nice that she's going to marry your brother, since you're such chums," said Billy. "Jim is a lucky dog."

Nell was still looking toward the conservatory, where a heavy curtain now concealed whatever pictures might transpire within.

"Yes," she said absently; "yes, it's nice—for me."

Meanwhile, in the conservatory, Peggy sat in a low chair, looking out into the autumn afternoon with its golden lights and long shadows. Her prospective husband stood beside her, looking down at her averted face and admiring the contour of her cheek.

"Jim?"

Her voice was low and a trifle uncertain. It was not the voice that had exchanged laughing badinage with Nell a few minutes previous. Gordon wondered at the change, then, remembering suddenly that he was alone with his betrothed, he came and leaned over her chair, letting his hand slide along the arm until it met and held hers.

"We have n't had a moment alone together for ages," he whispered.

"No," she acquiesced; "we have n't."

The little hand lay quite still, as though acknowledging his right to hold it, but there was no answering pressure, nor did the color on her cheek deepen as he bent over her.

"For ages," he repeated. "We have n't been alone together, Peggy, for a thousand years."

"Jim," she said, "I want to talk to you. There are things I must tell you. You'll listen, won't you, and try to understand?"

"Let's cut it all out," he suggested, "and enjoy ourselves while we can. 'Life is short and time is fleeting,' you know, Peggy—confoundedly fleeting to-day, for I must be off in a little while."

"You are going out?"

"Yes, worse luck. You see, it's an old engagement. I had not the least idea when I made it that you would be here this afternoon."

"You seem to have a great many engagements lately."

"I'm most awfully unlucky about your visits to Nell. You ought to tell me ahead. Now, the last time you came——"

"Yes?"

"Well, of course I was just as sorry as I could be—really distressed. I tried my level best to get home, *you* know, Peggy. I wrote you how it happened."

"Yes, I know."

"Did you miss me, Peggy, or did n't you care?" His voice was tenderly reproachful, and she flushed guiltily.

"Why, yes, of course, Jim. Don't I always miss you?"

She spoke mechanically, with the manner of one whose thoughts are detached, yet who wishes to make a suitable reply.

"I don't know, I'm sure. You are not very communicative about it, if you do."

Had Peggy looked at him, she might have observed that his lips had settled into the expression they always assumed when he was displeased. But she merely sat quietly in her low chair, and for a time silence reigned in the conservatory. Then Peggy spoke.

"Jim," she said, "have we made a mistake, you and I? Are you quite, quite sure?"

"Sure of what?"

"That we are suited to each other. Marriage is—well, it *lasts* such a long time, and lately I've been thinking."

"Well?"

"I've wondered whether we were going to be happy. One should be very sure about being happy, Jim, don't you think so?"

He was looking at her now, his expression concentrated and suspicious.

"How long have you been wondering?"

"I don't know exactly. Just lately."

He bent his gaze upon the floor, and she continued, her voice faltering now and then with the effort of what she was saying:

"I'm not sure I would satisfy you. I'm rather exacting, perhaps, and I might say and do things you would not like. Oh, yes, I *would*! Sometimes I just can't help it. And I might want to do one thing

when you wanted to do another,—and we'd both expect our own way. It might be very dreadful, don't you see? Oh, Jim, can't you help me say it?"

"Are you asking me to release you from your promise?"

She hardly recognized his voice, it was so hard and metallic.

"Would n't it be better for us both, Jim?"

Gordon came quickly forward and faced her. His nostrils were quivering, and his mouth was set in hard, repellent lines. He had the appearance of a man determined to hold his own against all odds, rather than one whose heart had just received an unexpected wound, and Peggy vaguely realized this, although she did not understand it. She felt rather frightened at the result of her words, and weakly temporized:

"I don't want to hurt you, Jim. I—well, I did n't suppose you really cared. I know I promised, and, of course, I'll keep my word unless you——"

"I won't release you, if that is what you mean. No," he continued; "I have no desire to set you free, and I'm not troubled by the mysterious doubts and forebodings that appear to have descended upon you all at once from nowhere in particular."

He paused a moment, then added slowly and with evident meaning:

"It is a little odd, is n't it, how very recently these doubts have risen? I won't ask what, or rather *who*, is responsible for them——"

"Jim!"

There was a quality in her voice demanding explanation and apology. Gordon recognized it at once and realized that he had gone too far.

"We won't quarrel, Peggy," he said, and it was the lover speaking now. "I was beastly, but you frightened me, you know. It is rough on a fellow to be so near his paradise and have the door slammed in his face. I can't give you up—you must not ask it of me."

He came closer, leaning over her until his breath touched her cheek. She did not move or answer, but an involuntary shrinking of her whole body spoke eloquently enough, had he chosen to observe and interpret.

"Is it all right, Peggy?"

And Peggy, looking off toward the surrounding mountains, gray just now against a leaden sky, did not withdraw the hand he took in both his own. It lay inert and passive in his grasp, but the fingers were cold to the tips and trembled slightly as he drew her toward him.

A clock chimed, and Gordon frowned uneasily.

"I'm afraid——" he said, but she interrupted him at once:

"Yes, I know. You told me. Of course you must go."

"But I want to stay with you, Peggy."

She smiled and shook her head.

"If people will make engagements——" she began, but paused as he knelt beside her and clasped her in his arms.

"You love me, Peggy? Say it."

"Oh, Jim! I——"

"You're too good for me, I know that, but——"

The rustle of skirts announcing an approaching interruption, he released her suddenly and bolted for the door, almost capsizing his mother *en route*.

"Really," remarked that good lady, when she had recovered her equilibrium—"really, James ought to look where he is going."

"Mrs. Gordon," said Peggy, in reply, "would you be so very good as to let me out of your back door? And will you tell Aunt Julia I've gone home? I have rather a headache, and I don't want to meet all those people again. You don't mind?"

"Surely not, dear child. A brisk walk in the fresh air will do you good. This way, Peggy."

But as the girl walked slowly away Mrs. Gordon first smiled, then sighed and shook her head.

"She's been quarrelling with Jim again," she reflected. "Ah, well! She might as well get used to it. He is *very* like his father."

Peggy took a circuitous and unfrequented path to reach home. She wanted to be alone, and preferred to pick her way through underbrush and dead leaves, with unexpected wet and boggy places beneath them, rather than to walk dry-shod along the highway, where the chances were she would meet every one she knew.

The October air seemed bleak and chill as she plunged into the path beside the woods, and she buttoned her jacket closer across her chest. She was glad they were soon going back to town. Mountains, reflected Miss Carrington, while very desirable in July and August, leave much to be desired as a place of residence in winter.

But this winter would be different, for she would be married. "Married!"—Peggy repeated the word aloud. After all, she would be glad when it was over and she could settle down into some sort of daily routine. She and Jim alone together in the very complete and up-to-date apartment they had selected—she caught her breath as she thought of it. Quite suddenly she remembered a laughing remark of Nell's—that Jim never had a civil word for any one until after he had breakfasted and the day was well aired. Endless vistas of breakfasts unfolded themselves before her mind's eyes—three hundred and sixty-five in one year. How many in ten years? Twenty years? She abandoned her efforts at calculation and walked on more swiftly.

The path turned sharply, bringing up alongside a broken fence,

and with a start Peggy realized that the way she had chosen led past the English cabin, now dignified by the mysterious presence of death. For only yesterday had they carried Bessie English home. To-morrow they would bear her forth again, and this time she would not return.

Peggy hesitated a moment. Should she stop and offer sympathy and what assistance she could. Money, she knew, had been given freely, and sympathy also, but both had met with scant response. She wanted, yet feared, to go inside, and as she hesitated she noticed the Bishop's cane leaning against the door. Peggy smiled tenderly.

"If they have him, they don't need me," she reflected, yet lingered still, as if loath to pass the place without a word.

At last she walked on slowly, her eyes grave and troubled. The sight of the wretched cabin had given a new trend to her thoughts. Those women she had overheard talking at the Gordons'—what had they meant by their innuendos and veiled allusions? What was this thing everybody was discussing, and about which she was not enlightened? Why had Aunt Julia chosen openly and pointedly to ignore Dick that afternoon? What had he to do with that poor dead girl? Why had he left so abruptly, and where had he gone?

Anxiously pondering these matters, Peggy turned another corner and came suddenly face to face with the object of her thoughts.

Archer was seated on a stump, profitably employed in digging holes in the ground with a stick. He turned as the dead leaves rustled beneath approaching feet, and rose hastily.

"Peggy!" he said. "Peggy!"

"Yes," she replied. "Why not?"

"I did not expect to see you here."

"Did you think nobody but yourself knew of this path?"

Peggy was conscious that her manner was constrained, and she felt hotly indignant that such was the case. She tried now to speak naturally, but carefully avoided looking at him.

"Why in the world are you sitting on that stump?"

"I was waiting to see Uncle Edward."

"Oh!" Peggy involuntarily lowered her voice. "He is—there." She motioned toward the English cabin.

"I know. I was waiting for him to come home. I want to see him."

"Well, he'll come some time. But I must run along if I'm to get home before dark."

"I'll come with you if I may. You don't mind?"

"No, Dick; of course not."

They walked slowly and in silence along the little path that Cynthia English had traversed at sunset the day before. Suddenly Archer paused and laid his hand upon her arm.

"What's the matter, Peggy?"

"Matter?"

"Yes; with you. You are so—so different. Are you angry with me? It was not wholly my fault. I—well, I could not help it."

A little shower of dead leaves fell upon them, and Peggy lifted one gently, with a quick, pitiful remembrance of the tender young green of its early springtime, but she did not speak.

"I have not said I was sorry," he resumed, "because I don't believe I am. And you, Peggy—are you sorry?"

"I think we were both mad—quite mad," she said. "Let us walk on, Dick."

A little rift of sunshine came through the trees, touching her hair and turning it to gold, but leaving her face in the shadow. They walked on silently until they came to where the path forked beneath the birch tree. The branch leading into the ravine was well trodden now and plainly marked, for many feet had passed over it since Cynthia went there yesterday. Then Archer paused and spoke earnestly.

"Peggy," he said, "once we made a great mistake and threw away our happiness because we quarrelled about a trifle. Don't let us make another, for there is still time. You love me, Peggy."

"Oh, Dick, don't!"

"And I love you. You know it, dear. And so, Peggy——"

"Hush!" she said. "I will not listen."

"I do not understand you to-day, Peggy. Look at me—straight into my eyes—and tell me to leave you. I shall know the truth then, for those gray eyes cannot lie."

Slowly, almost unwillingly, the girl raised her head and looked at him, standing there beneath the birch tree at the forking of the path. But her eyes went no further than the one word deeply cut in its smooth bark.

"Bessie!" she said. "See, Dick! It is her name. That poor, poor girl. I wonder who cut it."

The gray eyes sought his now, clear and honest, compelling honesty in return.

"I wonder who cut it," she repeated.

Archer's eyes met hers squarely, but his face was very pale and he hesitated long before replying.

"I did," he said, at last. "I carved the name. But, Peggy——"

A squirrel ran down the path and sprang into the tree, by way of warning them that their solitude was soon to be invaded, but they did not heed him.

"Peggy——"

"Wait, Dick," she interrupted. "It is I who do not understand."

Why is Aunt Julia so bitter against you? What is this thing everybody is whispering about, but I don't know? And what"—again the clear gray eyes sought his—"what have *you* to do with Bessie English or her death?"

But Archer did not answer, for just then the Bishop, whose approach the squirrel had heralded, laid one hand upon Peggy's shoulder and the other on his nephew's.

"Well met," he said, "and welcome, Dick! It seems a long time since I saw you. I hope you were going home with Peggy."

"No," said Archer; "not to-day. But I was waiting for you, Uncle Edward. I wondered if you would like to take a walk."

"And I was coming home from Mrs. Gordon's," put in Peggy, "and found him sitting on a stump. So he came this far with me."

The Bishop looked curiously from one to the other. The two young people represented all that was best and dearest to the childless man, and he was quick to detect that all was not well with them.

"So now," he said cheerfully, "we will all take a walk together, eh, Peggy?"

Peggy's reply came at once, and with decision:

"Not to-day, Uncle Edward. I am sorry, but I must hurry home."

"And I," said Archer, "did not realize how late it is. I promised to meet Barlow at the Club, and I'm behindtime already. We'll have our walk another time, Uncle Edward. Good-by, Peggy."

He lifted his hat and walked rapidly away, and the Bishop sighed as he watched him disappear.

"Peggy," he said, "I've seen much misery to-day, and my heart is heavy because I am powerless to help it. I'm troubled, too, over many things I cannot talk about. I don't want to go home just yet. Come with me, my dear, and let us watch the sunset from Table Rock."

Late that afternoon Gordon sat at the window of the Country Club, lost in a brown study, an untasted glass beside him. He was thinking of Peggy. She had looked very lovely that afternoon, and in her eyes had shone a new light he had never seen before. Concerning this new light, he became speculative and analytical, and sought for an explanation of its presence. It did not seem to dovetail with recent events, for it was an eager light, and she had showed symptoms of indifference of late even before her unexpected outburst in the conservatory.

This indifference could be traced, now he thought of it, directly to Archer's return from abroad, and the conclusions to be drawn from it were very distasteful. Marriage with Margaret Carrington

was most desirable from a financial as well as from a social standpoint, and he intended it should be consummated at the time appointed.

He had been surprised as well as disgusted when Archer had suddenly appeared in Glen Summit, and had involuntarily assumed a belligerent attitude, determined to make things as unpleasant for his rival as possible.

Recent occurrences had been of a surprising nature, and there were whispers and insinuations in plenty, but no direct charges. One woman had that day referred to Archer as a "contaminating influence," and Gordon had deprecated the expression, remarking that no man should be convicted upon circumstantial evidence alone. He almost laughed as he recalled that conversation. Given time, he thought he could make Glen Summit an exceedingly unpleasant place of residence for Archer, even with only circumstantial evidence to fall back upon. But had he time? Peggy was as impulsive as the color of her hair implied, and he feared she might take some hasty and irretrievable step.

So he brooded darkly, weighing his chances and planning the discomfiture of the man he had never liked and recently had grown to hate, until the contaminating influence himself entered with Searle and Barlow—and to the latter justly belongs the opprobrium of what followed.

With the laudable intention of making things pleasant for every one, Billy enthusiastically greeted Gordon and immediately included him in their group. He ignored the scant response to his civilities, and refused to notice the extreme frigidity of the nod that passed between Archer and Gordon, explaining his density to Searle afterward by saying:

"Well, they were acting like a pair of donkeys, don't you know, and I thought if I could make 'em chin a bit things might smooth themselves out."

So he tried various topics, and finally referred to the untouched glass at Gordon's elbow. His own order had just arrived, and he requested a toast.

"Something we can all subscribe to, Jim," he said. "You know you're rather good on toasts and that sort of thing. Give us something extra special."

Gordon, his handsome face marred by the scowl upon it, played with the slender stem of his glass, and looked at Archer.

"To the little brown shoe!" he said. "May it——"

"Stop!" exclaimed Archer, but Gordon continued.

As he finished, he raised his glass with a laugh, but Archer struck it from his hand.

"It is a lie," he said, "and you know it!"

VIII.

"NEVER, never, will I speak out," affirmed Mrs. Biggs. "Wild horses and crushing upon wheels shan't drag it from me."

"It don't alter facts, what you do," returned Jeremiah. "Facts is facts. She come here—that's one fact. He come here—that's another. And two and two makes four."

The proprietor of the Little Lodge spoke in a regretfully triumphant manner, as one who knows he has the better of the argument, but deprecates his success. His better half, however, did not consider herself worsted.

"Four indeed!" she ejaculated. "Well, supposing two and two *do* make four. Who's the wiser, if nobody adds 'em up? And supposing he did come here," she subjoined. "There was others, too."

"There was," agreed Mr. Biggs. "What a night it was!"

Mrs. Biggs jerked her thread impatiently through the sock she was darning.

"I ain't sorry I let her in," she said. "No, I ain't. I ain't sorry I give her food and shelter. And if she went out scared when them others come, I did n't know it. I'd have kep' her here, so I would."

Jeremiah chuckled.

"That you would," he said. "Fed and housed her, and jawed at her every minute. For all the world like old Rover—all bark and no bite."

"I'll have you know," said his wife solemnly, "that this is no laughin' matter. A human soul gone to its account, Jeremiah Biggs, and you grinnin' over it like a Cheshire cat!"

Jeremiah suddenly became serious.

"When she was found," he said, "she had on one shoe, Miranda—one *brown shoe*. And its mate——"

Mrs. Biggs gave an involuntary shiver.

"Jerry," she whispered, "ain't it awful?"

Jeremiah nodded.

"Nights and days," continued Mrs. Biggs, still whispering, "I see that shoe in my bureau drawer. Nights I get up and feel of it. Days I lock the drawer, and the key in my pocket seems to pull me crooked. Jeremiah?"

"Well?"

"Let us burn it. If it was clean gone, I'd feel easier."

Jeremiah gazed at her in masculine superiority.

"Woman," he said, "that there shoe is *evidence*. It may be wanted any time. And law is law, no more, no less. I ain't denying,"

he continued after a moment's reflection, "that it's a pity so many seen it. Otherwise, Miranda, ashes it would be this night."

Mrs. Biggs folded her stocking, crushing it together resolutely.

"I never seen nothing," she affirmed, "I never heard nothing, and I've got nothing in my top bureau drawer neither. So there!"

"Sh-ss-h!"

Jeremiah rose and tiptoed to the door.

"I thought some one was comin'," he explained. "Seems to me I hear steps every time we get to talkin' things over."

Mrs. Biggs nodded.

"Jerry," she said, "this house is *watched*. Ever since the funeral and the coroner's inquest—what was it they said?"

"'Death by falling from Table Rock. Cause of accident unknown; responsibility not placed. Further investigation wanted,'" said Jeremiah promptly.

"Yes, that's it. Well, they're investigatin'. The tramp that come here for a bite to eat yesterday was n't a tramp, no more than the feller sellin' shoe-laces to-day was a peddler, and I know it."

"There's somethin' else on your mind, Miranda. Out with it."

Mrs. Biggs, in her turn, went quietly to the door, opened it, and satisfied herself that they were without audience. Then she felt in her capacious pocket and produced an envelope. From this she took a twenty-dollar bill and laid it on the table.

"Jerry," she said, "I found this in the shoe."

Jeremiah gazed fearfully at the money, as if he expected it to speak and denounce him, while Mrs. Biggs again felt in the envelope and this time produced a piece of thin letter-paper.

"It was wrapped in this," she said. "Read it."

Jeremiah adjusted his steel-rimmed spectacles and took the paper between thumb and finger, to decipher it.

This is for your temporary necessities [he read], and when it is gone you shall have more. Do not write to me, but come to Table Rock to-morrow afternoon, without fail. I shall be there.

The note bore no signature, and Jeremiah folded it meditatively.

"Why did n't you show me this before?" he inquired.

"I only found it to-day. I took it out—the shoe, you know—and somethin' told me to run my hand in it. Jerry?"

"Well?"

"Who wrote it?"

Mr. Biggs sat for a time lost in thought. Then he rose and sought the desk, beckoning his wife to follow, and opened the register.

"On page 47," he said, "they all wrote their names that night. Now we'll see."

Spreading out the thin slip of paper, he carefully compared the words upon it with each name inscribed on the register. Steadily his finger travelled down the line, pausing uncertainly sometimes, then passing on again, until it reached the bottom of the column. There it stopped, definitely and conclusively.

"Miranda," he said, "look here."

Breathless, the host and hostess of the Little Lodge bent over page 47 of their register and scrutinized the last line. Then they looked at each other, and Jeremiah spoke.

"It's his'n," he said, and closed the book.

Meanwhile, further down the mountain, Cynthia English sat on the step of her cabin, which bore evidence of having been swept recently. This was enough to indicate that something unusual had happened, even if Cynthia herself had not worn a clean frock and had smoothly brushed hair.

The room within was swept also, and over Israel's cot a fresh white cover was spread. Incidentally, the cover was over Israel as well as the cot, but this was a minor detail, of no importance to the neighbor who had placed it there. She had merely included him in her general scheme of renovation, and no personal compliment was intended. Israel plucked at the cover with shaking fingers, and his eyes turned often to the open door, where his wife's shrunken figure was silhouetted against the light.

Cynthia sat motionless. She had taken up her position there after the neighbors had left and the subdued bustle of the last two or three days had given place to enveloping silence, and she continued to sit gazing at the mountain rising before her, whenever she was not actually obliged to go indoors.

There had been help in plenty, and more companionship than she wished, after Bess was brought home. Cynthia had longed to be alone with her dead, but this privilege had been denied her, so she had subsided into sullen silence, passively enduring what she could not avoid, and accepting what she did not desire.

They, the neighbors, had swept and garnished with well meant zeal. They had brushed her tangled hair, and brought her clean garments, dressing her with sympathetic touches and timely exhortations to bear up bravely under affliction, but she received their ministrations without comment.

Now it was all over. They had carried Bess away yesterday, and Cynthia was alone with her husband. The day waned and the afternoon shadows lengthened, but Israel lay on his cot, and his wife sat on the doorstep, equally motionless. Sometimes she turned and looked at him, and always his eyes met hers, gleaming strangely from

under bushy brows and glittering as if from fever. But Israel had no fever. The eyes that roved from corner to corner of the wretched room, continually returning to the doorway and his wife, were questioning eyes. Almost they seemed to compel attention and response, but Cynthia, when she turned, met them blankly, looking straight and steadily until they roved again and the large, rough hands plucked uneasily at the cover.

At last she rose and came and stood beside him, looking down upon the helpless figure with no softening of her face nor pity in her eyes.

"Israel," she said, "you can hear me, I know."

She paused an instant, as if for confirmation of her statement, then resumed:

"That night when you went out with her clothes—when you took 'em, Israel—your girl's things—up to Table Rock—who did you see there?"

He shook his head dumbly.

"You've been a-watchin' me all day, Israel, and I know what you want well enough. You want me to tell you who found her, and all about it. But I ain't goin' to do it. You shut your door agin her as was your own flesh and blood, but she did n't come home, like you said she would, did she, Israel? No, I ain't goin' to tell you nothin'—not till you tell me who you seen on Table Rock that night. *You kin do it, if you will.*"

Israel moved his head uneasily from side to side, and, raising his hand with difficulty, pointed to his lips. His wife turned quietly away, and he clutched at her skirt as if seeking to detain her, but she twitched it from his grasp and passed out the open door, leaving him impotent upon his cot.

Israel watched her retreating figure as long as he could see it, then fumbled clumsily beneath his pillow. He was long in finding what he sought, for he could not raise himself nor move the pillow, but finally he produced a bit of faded blue ribbon from which hung a little silver heart. It was battered and tarnished, and quite without value; but he held it carefully, looking long at it, and finally replacing it beneath the pillow whence it came. Then Israel English drew the sheet above his head and groaned aloud.

Cynthia had no distinct purpose in her mind when she left the cabin. It merely seemed to her as though she must get out and away somewhere. So she walked aimlessly, hurrying along as if she had some definite object in view. She chose a different path to-day, and one but little traversed. It skirted the edge of the woods and ran alongside the road over which they had carried Bessie English only yesterday. This afternoon her mother followed it again, half mechan-

ically, hastening on to the very small and much neglected reservation where the mountain people left their dead.

When she reached the whitewashed fence she stopped abruptly, for some one was there before her. A man stood beside the gate, one hand upon the latch, as if about to enter, and Cynthia knew him well.

"So," she said, "you've come to her in daylight this time. Haven't you made a mistake?"

He dropped the latch and turned hastily.

"Mrs. English——" he began, but she interrupted ruthlessly.

"You like moonlight best, you know, and twilight, after things gits sort o' dim and misty. You're earlier 'than usual to-night, Mr. Gordon. Why is it?"

Opening the gate, she motioned him to enter.

"You won't? Well, it don't matter to me, and she don't care now."

But Cynthia did not enter either. Instead, she pointed to a mound conspicuous among its fellows because of the loosely piled earth and trampled grass about it.

"Ain't it queer?" she said. "That's Bess, that is. She's there, and you and me, we're here."

"Mrs. English——" Gordon made another attempt to speak, but again she interrupted him.

"Was it you she went out to meet that night?" she said. "You or him—the other one? I reckon"—she came closer and laid her hand upon his arm—"I reckon it was *you*, Jim Gordon. She liked you mighty well, did n't she?"

Gordon involuntarily moved a step backward, but her hand closed firmly upon his arm.

"And you liked her, too. She never told me nothing, but I *know*. Where'd she git money to buy them clothes she wore? Who give her that gold chain and locket? And who was she goin' off to the city with? That's what I want to know. She left a letter sayin' she was goin'; but she did n't say who with. Was it you, Jim Gordon, was it you?"

Gordon, very pale, attempted to free his arm from the restraining fingers.

"Mrs. English," he said, "you are saying very strange things. I can only suppose you are not quite responsible just now."

"Strange?" she repeated. "Yes, it is strange, ain't it? Bess is dead, and she did n't slip and fall. She just could n't. How did it happen? That's what I want to know."

"I don't know," he said. "Why do you ask me?"

"I want to know how it happened," she repeated. "Yes, and I

will know, too. The man that done it shan't keep quiet always. I think I know him, but I ain't sure—yet."

Gordon looked down upon the little figure beside him. The frosty October air had brought no tinge of color to the pale face, its features pinched by long-continued poverty and sharpened by recent suffering. As he looked, his own face softened. He no longer resented the presence of the toil-worn hand upon his arm, but gently laid his own upon it.

"Mrs. English," he said, "I am sorry."

Cynthia was quick to note his change of tone. She lifted her eyes and looked at him long and wistfully.

"You liked her, didn't you?" she said pitifully. "And—and you'd have treated her square, Jim Gordon, square and honest?"

Gordon did not meet the questioning eyes. He looked away, across God's Acre, to the mountain on the other side. It rose grim and majestic, screening the world beyond from curious eyes, and beyond the mountain lay the city that Bessie English had longed to see.

"Square and honest," insisted Cynthia, "square and honest?"

Gordon's forehead contracted, and the hand that had covered hers now sought his pocket.

"Why, of course," he said hastily. "Of course, Mrs. English."

Cynthia released his arm and leaned against the fence. She felt suddenly very tired, and her voice, when she next spoke, was no longer insistent, but weak and trembling.

"She went out that night to meet some one. It was *you*—somehow, I seem to know it. And the storm come with the rain and the wind. Oh, the wind, the *wind*! And she never come back, Jim Gordon. Why was that?"

"I don't know."

Gordon's voice was scarcely more than a whisper, but after a moment he spoke again, slowly and distinctly.

"Mrs. English," he said, "I don't quite understand what you mean, but there is one thing I want to say. Can you follow me?"

She nodded eagerly.

"I have been foolish, as other men are foolish, over a pretty face, and perhaps I have wronged you. But I am not responsible for—that."

He motioned to the freshly-covered mound, and Cynthia's eyes sought it also.

"Was n't it you she went to meet?" she questioned. "Yet here, before me and her, you say that you ain't responsible. Who is?"

"I don't know. If I did——"

Gordon paused and withdrew his hand from his pocket. Abruptly

he raised the hand that hung limply at Mrs. English's side, and held it for a moment in his own.

"Please use it," he said, and walked rapidly away.

Cynthia watched him go. Then she slowly opened her hand and disclosed a crumpled bank-note. Smoothing it out upon the fence, she studied with interest the figures in the corner. Gordon had been generous. She and Israel could subsist in comfort all winter upon what it represented.

Tightly the worn and knotted fingers of both hands closed upon the note and tore it across the middle. Again and again they tore it, until nothing remained but a few indistinguishable fragments. These she looked at for an instant, then opened her hand and dropped them on the ground.

The October wind blew her limp skirt around her and chilled her to the heart. It played among the dead leaves at her feet, raising them at last in a little cloud and scattering them to all points of the compass. And with them went sundry fragments of paper indicating good coin of the realm.

IX.

"You know," said Searle, "it is a bad business all around. I don't at all blame you, old chap, but it gives our Club a black eye. We mean to help you out, of course, but how are we to prove that Gordon lied?"

"Yes," chimed in Barlow; "yes, Dick, we'll stick by you, but——"

"Yes," said Searle. "But you make it difficult for us. Let us settle on some nice, probable story now, don't you know, and stick to it."

"Now you're talking, Randolph," interrupted Billy. "That's what we're going to do. But it would help a lot if Archer would tell us the whole thing, just as it happened."

They were sitting in Searle's library, a room which bore evidence of a lack of femininity, yet which was nevertheless endowed with an undeniable fascination. Its owner had wandered far into many lands, and he elected to make his mountain home the repository of the choicest gems of his collection.

Archer turned troubled eyes from one to the other, finding friendship and hearty good will, slightly tempered with curiosity, in both faces.

"My dear fellows," he said, "I cannot tell you why I went, nor where I was going. I wish I could."

They smoked awhile gloomily, then Barlow spoke earnestly, yet in a half-hesitating, reluctant manner:

"You know, Dick, old chap, we were outside the window and saw—things. I'm sorry, but we did."

"What?"

"Yes," corroborated Searle. "It was dark outside and very bright inside, with all the shades up. We had no intention of spying on you, Archer, and we're not blaming you. Who would n't have done it in your place? But we saw."

"Just what did you see?"

Archer spoke with evident anxiety, and Barlow replied, his voice implying an apology for what he said.

"We did not see her face, Dick," he concluded, "and evidently she had on Mrs. Biggs's clothes. But those wonderful long braids of auburn hair told their own story. Only one girl upon the mountain wore them, and so——"

He paused, and Searle took up the thread of discourse.

"And so, Archer, when the Bishop asked us to come to the Little Lodge this afternoon, and said he was going to bring that fellow from police headquarters that's been nosing around here lately, we—well, it's hard to say."

"Please go on," said Archer.

"It's just this, Dick," said Barlow. "We know you're all right, but we hoped you liked us well enough to state the case frankly. As you don't, the only thing to do is to get together and find a reason for your starting up the mountain as you did that night,—a reason that will pass muster."

Barlow had rarely spoken so gravely in the course of his frivolous life, and Searle nodded approbation.

"That's it exactly," he said.

During the ensuing silence, the three men carefully avoided looking at one another. Archer held his cigar between his fingers, and it went out as he studied the pattern of the rug beneath his feet.

"You mean——?" he said.

"Just this, Dick"—Barlow spoke quietly: "things may be pretty nasty for you before this investigation is over. You'll come out all right, of course, but it may be unpleasant. Gordon is very liable to make it so, if he can, after what happened at the Club the other day. Now, if you would tell us why you chanced to be at the Little Lodge with—her, it would be lots better. Of course, if it were not for the shoe——"

"We don't mean to be officious or impertinent, Archer," broke in Searle, "but there will be questions this afternoon that must be answered, and the Bishop has personally requested us to tell all we know about that unfortunate night. He expects you to be there?"

"Yes; and Gordon also."

Silence, then Billy offered a suggestion.

"Suppose," he hazarded, "that Archer lost his way (we lost ours, you know), and suppose Mrs. Biggs had a—a niece or something visiting her. She'd have to wear shoes, of course, and why should n't they be brown?"

Archer laid his cigar upon the table, and, standing behind his friends, put a hand on the shoulder of each.

"Dear old chaps," he said, "I admit that I'm awfully sorry you looked in the window that night. I have nothing to say on the subject, except that perhaps you would have done the same thing in my place. We won't cook up any story about Mrs. Biggs's niece, please, Billy. I'll have to face the music and take what's coming to me, and maybe I deserve some of it, as I was more or less of a fool for a while. But I'd like you to know I was simply foolish—nothing more."

"I believe it, Dick," said Barlow simply.

"And so do I," said Searle. "Now we must be off. I wish the thing were well over."

On the hearth of the Little Lodge a fire burned cheerfully. It was, however, the only cheerful thing in the room, for the countenances of Mr. and Mrs. Biggs, who sat beside it, indicated abysmal depths of gloom. Occasionally, Jeremiah glanced out of the window, or Mrs. Biggs rose and with her skirt rubbed an imaginary speck of dust from the row of chairs set ready for expected guests.

"It's nigh three o'clock," said Mr. Biggs, in the manner of one who announces the approach of the hour set for execution.

Mrs. Biggs nodded and smoothed her skirt nervously.

"Jerry," she said, "I'm tired of the hotel business. Too many things happen. Let's give it up and live private and quiet-like."

But Jeremiah screwed up his mouth and shook his head, glancing affectionately toward the safe in the corner.

"It pays," he said. "It pays. Not but what there are moments, Miranda, when I wish I was a private individooal instead of a public character, so to speak, and this is one of 'em."

The striking of the clock interrupted him, and he counted aloud, as if in doubt of the hour.

"Three," he concluded. "Now, Miranda, remember, this here is evidence, if it ain't a court of law. So be careful what you say, and tell as much of the truth as you can."

Mrs. Biggs assented, checking off imaginary statements on her fingers as they occurred to her, and finally pausing defiantly.

"There's one thing I shall not mention, Jeremiah Biggs. It ain't necessary."

"No," agreed Jerry; "it ain't. There's no use, Miranda, in telling everything you know, 'specially when it's got nothin' to do with the case in point. Here's the Bishop now. I'll open the door. Keep your head, Miranda, whatever you do."

Bishop Reyburn was accompanied by a short, wiry man with very restless black eyes, to whom Mrs. Biggs at once took a violent and unjust dislike as he was presented to her.

"This is Mr. Marvin, Mrs. Biggs, of whom you may have heard."

Having accommodated Mr. Marvin with a chair, Mrs. Biggs immediately turned her back squarely upon him and left him to his own devices, until the arrival of Searle, Barlow, and Archer created a diversion. Gordon soon followed them, and, bowing slightly to the Bishop, took a chair a little apart and bent his frowning gaze upon the floor.

After Gordon's arrival, the Bishop looked inquiringly at Marvin.

"We are all here, I think," he said; but the detective shook his head.

"I am waiting for one more," he replied, "but I see him coming. Perhaps Mr. Biggs will kindly open the door."

Jeremiah hastened to comply, and almost immediately returned, followed by Lemuel Watkins.

"Set down," said Mrs. Biggs, proffering a chair with evident reluctance.

Lemuel sat down, thrust his hands in his pockets, and scowled upon every one impartially. Then his features settled into an expression of real malevolence as his glance returned to Archer and lingered there.

A week ago Lemuel had followed Bessie English up the rough road to the little cemetery, and had returned with Cynthia to the cabin in grim silence. He had then sought the society of the yellow mule and his own avocations and disappeared from public view. His presence at the Little Lodge was unexpected to the Bishop, who glanced at him from time to time with evident anxiety, prompted by a vague feeling that his testimony would be important, and might prove incriminating also.

"I believe every one who is directly concerned with the case has arrived," said Marvin, "and so——"

But the Bishop interrupted. "Gentlemen," he said, "I have first to thank you for complying with my request to come here this afternoon. Mr. Marvin, as you know, is here to investigate the death of that poor girl whose tragic end has shocked us all. He desires to know exactly what happened in this house the night of the storm, so I have asked you to meet him, knowing you would willingly give him all the information you can."

He paused expectantly, as though for confirmation of his statement.

"Very glad to be of any service possible," murmured Searle, feeling that a blank was before him that must be filled.

Mr. Marvin moved his chair more to the centre of the room, and looked from face to face with interest.

"If you will allow me," he said, "I will take notes of what you tell me. Most of the main facts I know already, but there are doubtless details that have escaped me, and I shall be grateful for your assistance. It seems you all happened to be storm-stayed here on the night in question—of course, excepting Mr. Watkins."

"Yes," said Searle.

"Perhaps Mr. Biggs will kindly tell us just what happened that afternoon. You had a number of visitors, I believe. Who was the first?"

"It was Bessie English."

Jeremiah moistened his lips as if he found articulation difficult, then proceeded:

"It might have been about four o'clock, and raining hard, when we heard a knock at the back door, and my wife opened it. It was Bessie English, wet to the skin and shiverin' with cold. She wanted to come in and get warm and dry."

"And you admitted her?"

"I would n't turn a dog out such a day," interposed Mrs. Biggs, "much less a human being."

Lemuel Watkins seemed about to speak, but restrained himself.

"My wife asked her in," resumed Jeremiah, "and made her take off her wet clothes and drink somethin' hot, for she was chilled through. She gave her dry things of her own, and told her she might spend the night here."

"And she accepted?"

"She did n't say she would, and she did n't say she would n't. Jest set there and squeezed the water out of her hair and listened to the wind and rain. Lord, what hair it was!"

Mr. Biggs lost himself in momentary retrospection, and his wife took up the story:

"After a while I found that I could n't get nothing out of her, so I lost my patience and come in here with Jeremiah, leaving her to herself."

"And then?"

"We set here and talked."

"And who was your next visitor?"

Jeremiah waited for his wife to answer, but she said nothing, so he spoke himself, prefacing his remarks with an apologetic cough.

"It was Mr. Archer. He come in wet and cold enough, and wanted brandy and soda."

Here followed a circumstantial account of subsequent arrivals, corroborated by each in turn.

Marvin listened intently, now and then interposing a question or making note of a statement. Then he turned to Searle.

"You had lost your way, you say, Mr. Searle, and were attracted by lights. Of course you looked through the window to identify the place?"

"Yes, we did."

"What did you see?"

"This room, with Mr. Archer sitting by the fire."

"Was he alone?"

"No; there was a woman with him."

"Did you recognize her?"

"We could not see her face."

Searle's voice plainly indicated that he resented the question.

"But you thought you recognized her, nevertheless?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"By her hair."

"You would swear to her?"

"Certainly not."

Searle spoke sharply, and his interlocutor smiled a little.

"Swear not at all," he quoted, "until you must, of course, and that won't be to-day."

He proceeded with his inquiries, merely eliciting facts already known to those present, and finally turned to Gordon.

"Mr. Gordon," he said, "will you tell us where you were going that eventful night?"

"I was merely riding for pleasure, and had no definite objective point."

The eyes of Mr. and Mrs. Biggs involuntarily sought the register on the desk and met in mute inquiry.

"Was it not rather an odd day for a pleasure trip?"

"It was not raining when I started. Searle and Barlow did the same thing."

"When did you next see the girl, Mrs. Biggs?"

"I did n't see her at all." Mrs. Biggs was busily engaged in laying folds in her handkerchief. "There was things on my mind, and people kep' a-comin' till I did n't know whether I was on my head or my heels."

"Yes, of course it was most annoying for you"—Marvin's voice expressed deep sympathy. "Well?"

"Well, when I *did* remember her, and went upstairs with some supper for her, she was gone."

"Without a word?"

"Did n't I just tell you I had not seen her? She had dressed herself in her own clothes, for they was dry by this time, except one shoe. It was still under the kitchen stove, wet and heavy with mud. So she walked off in one of her shoes and one of mine. She must have lost it in the mud, as it was too big for her."

"I understand. And have you the shoe she left? I should like to see it."

Mrs. Biggs went to fetch it, and Jeremiah took that opportunity to replenish the fire, although it did not need it. He said afterward, in conjugal privacy, he felt that queer inside of him, he must do something or bust.

Marvin held the little shoe by its brown ribbon when he received it, and looked from one to the other interrogatively.

"We will take each in turn," he said. "Mr. Gordon, is that the shoe you saw in this room the morning after the storm?"

"Yes," affirmed Gordon, "or its mate."

"Mr. Barlow?"

"No," said Billy positively; "it is not."

Archer leaned suddenly forward and his color rose. He seemed about to speak, but Marvin was before him:

"What reasons have you, Mr. Barlow, for thinking it is not the same?"

"Because the shoe we saw that morning was perfectly clean. It had been polished with ours. This one has had the mud brushed off it, but has not been polished. It has been wet through and allowed to dry out of shape. Surely it is a perfectly clear and simple proposition. You see, Randolph?"

"Yes," agreed Searle; "that is true. The shoe we saw here, Mr. Marvin, was well cared for and in good shape. This is not the same. I know," he finished, "because I held it in my hand and returned it to Mrs. Biggs."

"What is your opinion, Mr. Archer?"

"I have none."

With an involuntary movement, Bishop Reyburn turned and looked at his nephew. There were both surprise and entreaty in his glance, but Archer did not meet it, for Lemuel Watkins began to speak, slowly at first, but as he proceeded his words poured forth with astonishing fluency.

"No," he said; "he ain't got no opinion, he ain't. And why? It's 'cause he don't want to have none. Lemme me see that shoe."

He caught roughly at it, but his fingers closed upon the un-

responsive leather with strange gentleness, and he held it almost tenderly as he examined it.

"It's her'n," he said at last. "Yes, it's her'n. Don't I know it well? Ain't I seen it on her foot many and many a time? You can't fool me. This belongs to Bess."

He turned to Archer and spoke in a threatening manner.

"What did you do it fur? 'Tain't no use to tell lies to me. Did n't I see you cuttin' her name on the tree? Yes, and did n't I see you fasten a gold chain around her neck? And did n't she promise to put a note under the stone, tellin' you when and where to see her agin? Answer me—ain't them things true? Oh, you did n't know I was a-layin' there flat in the bushes, a-list'nin' to you, and a-watchin' you. And I cussed you, soul and body, fur then I knowed it was you as had come between my gal and me. Have I spoke true or not?"

Marvin interposed quietly. "You are not on oath, Mr. Archer. Do you decline to answer?"

Lemuel took a fresh breath, and proceeded as if there had been no interruption. His thick, colorless hair fell down over his forehead unheeded, and his heavy voice was almost hoarse as he began to speak again, very hurriedly.

"Oath?" he sneered. "What's an oath to such as him? Ask him about the note under the stone at the foot of the birch tree. Oh, yes, he did n't think I watched fur it, too. And I read it, I did, and then put it back under the stone, so's he could get it. Ask him if he did n't find it there. It said: 'I'll meet you on Thursday afternoon up on Table Rock. Be sure and come.' Did he go? Thursday was the day of the big storm. Ask him if he went. Ask him if I've spoke the truth. *Ask him!*"

He paused, and looked from one to the other, his massive chest heaving with his panting breath, and great drops of perspiration standing out upon his brow. Slowly raising his hand, he pointed at Archer with a huge, toil-stained finger that trembled uncontrollably.

"Ask him," he insisted; but no one spoke for some minutes.

"Dick?"

It was the Bishop's voice, low and sad indeed, but commanding response. Marvin made an effort to speak, but the Bishop stopped him with an imperative gesture.

"Dick," he said, "you have heard this man. Has he spoken the truth?"

Archer raised his head and met the gravely questioning eyes squarely.

"Yes," he said, "it is all true."

Lemuel Watkins sank back upon his chair and wiped his brow

with his coat-sleeve, while an inarticulate murmur arose from Mrs. Biggs, whose attempt to speak had been promptly silenced by her husband.

"I think that is all for the present," began Marvin slowly, but Jeremiah interrupted him. An unusual spot of color shone on the little man's cheeks, and his manner was nervously excited.

"No, it ain't all!" he exclaimed. "There's more. Miranda, tell them what you found in the shoe."

Amid a breathless silence, Mrs. Biggs told of the money and the note, and, as she finished, she took them from her pocket and handed them to the detective. Marvin read the few lines aloud, and then turned to Mr. Biggs.

"Do you recognize the writing?"

"Yes."

"Whose?"

Jeremiah went to the desk and lifted the large, leather-bound book. Carefully he carried it across the room and laid it on the table between Bishop Reyburn and Marvin.

"I'd rather you gentlemen should judge for yourselves. I may be wrong."

Sick at heart, the Bishop bent over the page. The letters in the note spread out before him blurred into an indistinguishable mass, then gradually separated, standing forth black, distinct, and characteristic, and Bishop Reyburn took heart of grace, for it was not writing he knew well and had feared to see.

Slowly Marvin's finger travelled down the page, pausing at last where Mr. Biggs's had paused before him, and his eyes sought his companion in silent interrogation.

The fire snapped and glowed, sending countless brilliant sparks up the broad chimney, but the tension in the room was strained almost to the breaking-point. Then the Bishop spoke.

"Jim," he said, "come here."

It was almost as though he had forgotten the flight of years and was speaking to the lad he had known long ago.

Gordon came at once, for there was something compelling in the quiet voice and manner. His eyes obediently followed the direction of the finger that indicated the words upon the register and the few lines spread out beside it.

"Jim"—it was the Bishop speaking again, slowly and gravely—"can you deny that this is your writing?"

Gordon was silent for an instant, then he raised his head and returned the direct gaze steadily.

"No," he said; "I do not deny it. I wrote that note. But of the death of the girl, I know nothing whatever."

X.

Down the mountainside, Bishop Reyburn and Archer were walking homeward together, and for the most part in silence.

The council at the Little Lodge had dispersed shortly after Gordon's admission, each going his own way, burdened with his own thoughts, and disinclined for conversation. Marvin had asked but few more questions, and these of a perfunctory nature, and Gordon had volunteered one statement only.

"I shall not leave the place," he had said sharply, to the detective. "It will not be necessary to have me shadowed, I assure you. You had better turn your attention to other sources, Mr. Marvin. Believe me, it will be more satisfactory in the long run." His pause and glance at Archer had rendered his meaning so obvious that Barlow started forward, indignant protest on his lips. The Bishop, however, motioned him to silence, and proposed immediate adjournment.

"I knew you all when you were boys," he said, "and I have watched you develop into men. My own boy"—here he turned to Archer—"is naturally dearest to me, but there is room in my heart for you all. If you have any affection for me, or any memories of the old days, you will let this subject drop for the present. Jim, your hand! You spoke out bravely, and, please God, you will never regret it."

So they had dispersed, Marvin lingering to chat awhile with Mrs. Biggs, in spite of the very scant encouragement accorded him by that lady, who was heard to express the wish that the world was peopled with the feminine sex only.

"For where there's trousers, there's trouble," she concluded, "and if I had my way, I would n't have one of 'em round—not even a rooster."

The simile being doubtless suggested by the sight of a white chanticleer majestically strutting amidst a humble company of speckled hens.

Archer followed his uncle along the narrow path, his hands thrust into his pockets, and his felt hat pulled well down over his eyes. The afternoon had ended more fortunately for him than he had expected, yet he was far from satisfied.

"Dick?"—the Bishop had paused for a moment's rest and conversation, and his nephew must perforce do likewise.

"Do you know, my dear lad," the elder man continued, "I owe you an apology? When that paper was spread out before me, I felt as though I could not look at it."

"You thought the writing would be mine?"

"I feared it might."

"It might have been. I've written her notes, as well as Gordon. Not just that kind, though."

"I trust you, Dick, absolutely; and so does Peggy."

"Peggy!"

Archer's tone was bitter and incredulous.

"Peggy has refused to see me, Uncle Edward, since I told her I carved the name on the tree. I've written her, but she has not answered my letter. I do not think she trusts or believes in me. Perhaps Gordon——"

"Peggy has broken her engagement, Dick. She told me so this morning. She is very unhappy, poor child, and unlike herself. I know she trusts you in her heart, but your Aunt Julia——"

Here the Bishop hesitated uneasily.

"Aunt Julia does *not*," finished Archer. "Well, I cannot altogether blame her. I've been all kinds of a fool but one. I made my own bed, and now it's up to me to lie in it, without too much kicking. First, I let Peggy quarrel with me over nothing especial; then I lost her."

"I know."

The Bishop nodded sympathy, and Archer continued, as though glad to speak out at last:

"Then there was Bessie English. She bewitched me, I think. I was always hanging round that cabin after Peggy turned me down. We used to take walks, and sit by brooks, and so on, and Aunt Julia knew about it. She—Bessie—never really cared for me. If it was anybody, it was Gordon, but she was not a girl to break her heart over any man. I don't see——"

"Well?"

"I don't see now why I went back there again after I came home from abroad, but I did—worse luck!"

"When did you see her last?"

"The day of the storm—early in the afternoon. It was on Table Rock, and she came singing up the path from the ravine. Her hair was loose down her back, and she had put a wreath of laurel leaves on her head. She looked like a wood nymph, and I told her so. I had asked her to meet me somewhere. There was a matter—not a personal matter, Uncle Edward—that I wanted to speak to her about. She would not agree with me, so after awhile we talked of other things."

"Yes," said the Bishop; "and then?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. She had scratched her arm, so I tied my handkerchief around it, and said a number of silly things while I was doing it."

Bishop Reyburn felt in his pocket and produced a folded white square.

"Is this the handkerchief?"

"Yes. Where did you get it?"

"I found it on Table Rock the day Bessie English was found in the ravine. What next, Dick?"

"Nothing. The next thing I knew, the poor girl was dead, and Glen Summit was pointing the finger of scorn at me. Let us walk on, if you are rested."

But the Bishop was not yet ready to resume his walk.

"Richard," he said, "would it not be better to be entirely frank with me? Why did you go up the mountain that stormy night, and what is your explanation of the little brown shoe the next morning?"

Archer's brow contracted, and he stared moodily at the ground. His voice, when he spoke at last, was low and rather sullen.

"I have no explanation."

"I am sorry."

The Bishop was indeed grievously disappointed. He walked on slowly, pondering anxiously. Believing absolutely in his nephew's innocence, he was not blind to the fact that he had, by his own admission, been imprudent enough to afford foundation for much of the gossip that was rife in the community. Gordon's admission of the incriminating note did not establish the fact of his guilt, and the Bishop knew the detective would not be unduly impressed by it. Moreover, Bessie English had not been discovered until two days after the storm, and it was uncertain just when she met her fate. If Archer continued as uncommunicative as at present, what would be the result?

So he walked down the narrow path with bent head and heavy heart, while Archer followed, bitterly resentful of the world in general and of Glen Summit in particular.

The most curious thing in a curious world is human nature. It is as irrepressible as it is inconsistent, and as blind to its follies as it is prone to commit them. Consequently, when we blunder into a quagmire, we invariably blame the other fellow for allowing it to exist, instead of acknowledging that we should not have been there ourselves had we looked where we were going and kept our feet upon firm ground.

Therefore, in his present mood, Archer wasted no regrets on his own follies. He merely felt at odds with all his fellow creatures, especially those dearest to him and whose good opinion he valued most highly. As the path emerged on the high-road, the Bishop paused tentatively.

"Dick," he said, "come home with me to-night. Your old room is waiting for you, now and always."

Archer declined somewhat curtly.

"I've resisted all Aunt Julia's pressing invitations to visit her thus far," he said, "so I could hardly come to-day. Good-night, Uncle Edward—and thank you."

The Bishop said no more, but walked away, after a glance full of sorrow and silent sympathy. Archer's eyes grew rather misty as he watched the familiar figure until it disappeared around a bend in the road. He was conscious that he had been abrupt and ungracious, but made no effort to follow and make amends. Instead, he sat down upon a rustic bench placed beside the little stream that crossed the road just here, and gloomily reviewed the situation. It was an unprofitable employment, and one in which he had lately indulged to excess, but now he had something new to consider.

So Peggy had broken her engagement! Archer repeated this fact to himself several times, and rather wondered at the lack of emotion it produced. He had not seen her since the day beneath the birch tree, nor had she replied to the note in which he had requested her to name a time and place for an interview, since go to his aunt's house he would not until she invited him. So he felt aggrieved and indignant, and resolved that he would not write again. He would leave Glen Summit, he decided, just as soon as the mystery of Bessie English's death was solved and he was free to go. He rather thought he would go abroad again.

The little stream rippled noisily over its narrow bed, hurrying along as if it must make the most of the short time remaining before it would be frozen into silence for many months.

Now and then groups of people passed, many of whom hesitated as though they would like to stop a moment, then passed on, chilled by lack of encouragement, for Archer's acknowledgment of their salutations did not suggest a desire for their society.

And by and by came Peggy. She was walking with Helen Gordon, and the two girls were talking earnestly. Evidently Nell had not taken up the cudgels in behalf of her brother, for her arm was linked in Peggy's as affectionately as of old. So absorbed were they in their conversation that they had almost passed Archer before they saw him; then they paused abruptly, and Helen spoke:

"Won't you join us?"

Archer rose and lifted his hat mechanically, including both girls in the salutation, but looking only at Helen as he replied, pleading lack of time, due to an engagement, as an excuse for not accepting her invitation.

"But can't you walk a little way with us? Do come, Dick."

It was Peggy speaking now, half shyly, and not in her old imperative manner. Her color came and went fitfully, and Archer avoided looking at her as he replied:

"I'm afraid not this afternoon. Don't let me keep you standing any longer."

Peggy started as though she had been shot, and hurried on with flaming cheeks.

"Nell," she exclaimed, when they were well out of earshot, "he was rude—positively rude. And I let him see I wanted him."

"He *was* rude," agreed Nell thoughtfully, "but, Peggy, do you know, I think it was because he is unhappy."

"But so am I unhappy." Peggy was clearly unappeased. "You know, Nell. I was just telling you."

Nell pressed her arm sympathetically.

"Yes, dear, I know, but not just in the same way."

"What does he mean, I'd like to know!" cried Peggy, the Titian-tressed, "by telling me he loves me and then never coming near me again, or writing to me, or—or anything? And he never explained what I asked him either, and then—to-day! Oh, Nell, perhaps he *can't* explain!"

Helen could only murmur vaguely that she was sure he could and would. She had heard many things that had not reached Peggy's ears, for Mrs. Reyburn considered certain topics unfit for discussion in a young girl's presence, and had sedulously shielded her niece from the story of the Little Lodge, lest her ears be contaminated by its insinuation and inference.

Peggy knew, of course, that Bessie English was dead, and that Archer was under a cloud in the community. She had heard gossip and veiled allusions wherever she went, and had puzzled over them sorely and was half afraid of all that they implied. Then, too, she had been much absorbed in her own affairs, and was honestly anxious to act honorably toward the man she had promised to marry.

Since the day under the birch tree, however, she had come to very definite conclusions concerning herself and her future happiness, and had positively and decidedly broken her engagement. To Mrs. Reyburn's tearful and indignant protests, she had merely replied that she had discovered that she did not love Gordon and therefore could not marry him, and she intrenched herself behind the support and coöperation of her uncle—a never-failing refuge in time of trouble.

But now all her senses were fully awake. She meant to know everything concerning Archer, and judge for herself.

"Nell," she said, fixing her clear gray eyes anxiously upon her friend, "what is this thing about Dick? I want you to tell me everything you know. I—I have a *right* to know, for—oh, Nell, I love him!"

Helen told her all she knew, and much that she guessed, and Peggy listened, breathless. Suddenly she stopped short.

"I'm going back," she said. "I have something I must say to him. Don't come with me."

She hastily retraced her steps, but the rustic bench beside the stream was now occupied by a nurse and her charges, so there was nothing for Peggy to do but to go home unsatisfied, with a curiously oppressed feeling in the region of her heart.

"Miss Margaret," said the maid who opened the door for her, "here is a letter for you. You should have had it several days ago, but it must have slipped down behind the table. I found it there this afternoon."

Half an hour later, a flushed and excited girl dashed into the Bishop's study, an open letter in her hand.

"Uncle Edward," she cried, "look at this! He *did* write to me, and I never got it until just now. He'll think I don't care, and oh, I do—I do!"

"My dear child!"

The Bishop was slightly bewildered, and groped for his glasses, but Peggy buried her head in a convenient sofa-pillow and wept hysterically.

"It's all my fault," she sobbed, "every bit. And to think I never knew about it until Nell told me this afternoon! Why did n't you tell me, Uncle Edward? Why did n't somebody tell me? I think it was very unkind."

"My dear child!" repeated the astonished Bishop.

He felt her flushed cheek anxiously, being of the opinion that she had been taken suddenly ill and was delirious, but Peggy abruptly controlled herself and sat upright.

"Now, Uncle Edward," she said, "*listen*. Perhaps you'd better sit down first, for I'm going to tell you something very surprising."

And the Bishop obediently sat down and listened.

XI.

It was the general opinion in Glen Summit that Cynthia English's troubles had unbalanced her mind.

"Upon my word," said Mrs. Reyburn, returning from a well meant but unsuccessful visit of condolence, "you might suppose that unfortunate girl had been the most loving and dutiful of daughters—and everybody knows the contrary. I'm sure just now my sympathies are with Israel entirely."

And, indeed, Israel merited sympathy. He lay through long days and longer nights upon his cot, eating and drinking whatever was held to his lips, without reference to his personal preference in the matter—motionless and silent always. His wife tended him in much the same manner that she washed the few dishes. It was an un-

pleasant duty, but not to be avoided, and she performed it as speedily as possible and with but little attention to detail.

For many years he had ruled and intimidated her, but now the worm had turned, and it even seemed as though Israel were himself intimidated.

Cynthia had become strangely loquacious since her husband's lips were sealed. She would talk often to herself, and sometimes she would sit down close to Israel and whisper in his ear, repeating words and sentences as though to enforce their meaning. At such times a hunted, almost desperate look would creep into his eyes, and it would appear well for Cynthia's personal safety that he could not move.

Yet he did not like to be alone. He would clutch pleadingly at his wife's skirt and seek in every way to detain her when he saw her preparing to go out. Cynthia, who could interpret his every gesture, would sometimes stand beside him and look down upon him, a strange mixture of contempt and curiosity in her eyes.

"What are you afeard of?" she questioned one afternoon. "You don't want me here because it's *me*—I know that well enough."

He turned away his head, but a bit of her frock was still held between his large thumb and finger.

Cynthia bent over the cot and looked at him, compelling him by sheer force of will to turn his head again and meet her eyes.

"Israel," she said, almost in a whisper, "we had two children, you and me. The boy, he up and died when he was a little feller. The girl, she growed up fine and healthy. Why did she die, Israel, why did she die?"

He shook his head dumbly, as usual, and, with an impatient gesture, she jerked her skirt from his grasp and left the room for her evening walk up the road where they had carried her little red-haired girl. Every evening she walked up the road, but she did not always go inside. Often she merely paused awhile at the gate, and then retraced her steps to the cabin, where she would sit dully beside the hearth, with her back to the cot where her husband lay, his watchful eyes noting her slightest motion.

This evening, shortly after she left the cabin, Bishop Reyburn and the detective might have been discovered walking toward it, talking earnestly.

"It seems beyond belief," said the Bishop.

"Even more curious things have happened," returned Marvin. "We run across the strangest cases sometimes."

"You are sure about this?"

"Not at all sure, but I want to be. So far, I have only Mrs. English's word for it, but when she goes out in the evening I come

here and watch him through the window at the back. As he cannot move, there is no chance of his seeing me there. I am strongly tempted to try an experiment in psychology, but it must meet with your approval, so I have ventured to ask you to come with me to-night and talk it over."

"I will gladly do anything I can, Mr. Marvin. Of course you understand that the discovery of the guilty person is a matter very near my heart—if, indeed, the poor girl did not slip and fall, as I am more than half inclined to believe."

He paused, as though desiring to be sustained in this belief, but Marvin shook his head.

"I don't know," he said. "I don't know. It does not seem probable, in view of what I hear of the girl and her familiarity with the place. And Table Rock is broad and flat—no need of slipping or going too near the edge even in a storm."

"Mr. Marvin," said the Bishop, "my nephew—"

"I know," interrupted Marvin; "and I mean to clear him entirely from suspicion. That is why I want you to agree to the experiment of which I spoke. As to Mr. Gordon—well, he claims he can give a satisfactory reason for his ride up the mountain that night, but he does not do it. Let us stop here while I explain my idea—if we go closer to the cabin our voices might be heard. When we have finished, we can go on, and I will show you my point of observation."

Meanwhile, in her room at home, Miss Carrington had been having her hair shampooed. Peggy, since her abrupt entrance into the Bishop's study the previous evening, had found life most perplexing and unsatisfactory. Archer had not replied to the note his uncle had at once dispatched to him, nor had they been able to locate him by telephone or otherwise.

"It just shows, Uncle Edward," said Peggy disconsolately, "that he does not want to have anything more to do with me. And he's perfectly right, too, for he must think I've been a horrid little coward. Of course he does n't know that I did n't know what everybody else knew, and now you know——"

Here the Bishop smiled, and Peggy, seeing that she was becoming rather involved, stopped abruptly.

"It's all very well for you to be amused, Uncle Edward," she protested, "but I shall live and die an old maid, and you would n't like it yourself."

Whereupon she left the porch with dignity, and sought her own room, there to try various occupations, only to abandon them as flat, stale, and unprofitable, while the hours dragged themselves slowly away. Every time the door-bell rang, her heart quickened in response.

When the woman she had engaged for the shampoo arrived, she rather welcomed her as representing some definite occupation that could not be put aside.

"Though," reflected Miss Carrington, as she drew out her hair-pins, "what difference does it make whether it is washed or not? Who cares how I look?"

The shampoo and subsequent drying, however, helped to pass the afternoon, and the light was waning as Peggy stood before her mirror and braided the shining mass into two long tails.

"I'll just leave it so to-night," she decided, "for it's not quite dry. I'm not going anywhere, and evidently nobody is coming here, so it won't matter."

Still plunged in gloom, she sought the back porch, as an appropriate place of retreat under the circumstances, and there she encountered her aunt. Mrs. Reyburn held a covered basket in her hand, and her countenance bore the worried and slightly injured expression habitual when her plans miscarried.

"Margaret," she exclaimed, "it is *too* annoying! Really, Katy has a mind like a sieve. I especially told her to take this basket to Cynthia English before she started for her afternoon out, and she has forgotten all about it."

Peggy remarked that it was too bad of Katy, but would n't tomorrow do as well?

"It's beef tea for Israel," said Mrs. Reyburn. "I keep him supplied, but I get no gratitude for it. And to-night your uncle and I dine with Mrs. Overton. I should be dressing now, though goodness only knows *where* your uncle is!"

She shifted the basket from one hand to the other, uncertainly. Mrs. Reyburn's conscience was a stern taskmaster and kept her spurred on to accomplish her duty, but its performance often reacted disastrously to the peace of the family circle.

"He *ought* to have it," she said, and her niece awoke to a realization of the situation.

"Let me take it, Aunt Julia. I'd like the walk."

"Well—if you will." Mrs. Reyburn was obviously relieved. "But your hair! Why did n't you put it up?"

"It was n't quite dry, and, anyhow, it does n't matter. The path goes through the woods, and I will not meet a soul. Even if I do, I'm sure I look very nice and neat."

Mrs. Reyburn put up her glasses and surveyed her niece critically as she handed her the basket.

"You look about sixteen, with that short skirt and braided hair," she remarked. "I do *not* think the present fashion of very short walking-skirts for girls a desirable one, even with pretty feet and

ankles. Carry the basket carefully, my dear, and put on a sweater, for it gets chilly as soon as the sun goes down."

So it came to pass that Peggy, in the gathering twilight, followed her uncle and the detective along the little path through the woods, toward the English cabin.

The glow of the sunset was fading from the western sky, but opposite, behind the mountain, the moon was rising. She would do what she could to supply all deficiencies.

And as the glow faded, the restlessness and unsatisfied longing that had filled the girl's heart faded also. In its place, coming she knew not why, was a sense of peace—a certainty that all would yet be well with her, and an abiding faith in the man she loved.

The dead leaves rustled beneath her feet, overhead the occasional whir of wings marked the flight of a startled bird, but she walked on quietly until she found herself beneath the birch tree where she had stood with Archer, and he had asked her not to make another mistake.

Peggy paused here and with her finger traced the letters of the word carved upon it. A wonderfully sweet expression shone in her gray eyes as she laid her cheek for an instant against the smooth bark.

"Dick dear," she murmured, "I *don't* understand, but you need never explain, for I trust you."

Then she resumed her walk, passing softly up the path leading to the cabin and entering the open door without knocking, even as another girl had been wont to do not long previous. So like to that other girl was the slim figure, with its short skirt and two long braids, that Cynthia, returning from her walk, paused at the gate and clasped her hands in silent anguish before she hurried after it.

XII.

ISRAEL ENGLISH, left alone upon his cot, watched his wife's departing figure resentfully. He moved his head angrily, and clenched his hand in a manner that would have boded ill for Cynthia had he been up and around.

Through the open door he could see the mountain, grim and changeless, but his back was toward the ever varying western sky, with its golden glow. Israel could not turn his body and look through the window behind him, and even if he had been able to do so, it is doubtful if he would have availed himself of the privilege, for to some people a sunset is a sunset, even as the "primrose by the river's brim" is nothing but a yellow flower. But he did not like the twilight he knew was closing about him, and he did not like to be alone.

Frequently he felt as if he were *not* alone, and therein lay the trouble. The shadows took strange shapes to his diseased fancy, and on several occasions he had thought he heard breathing. At such times Israel huddled down on his cot and drew the scanty covers as close about his head as possible.

So he lay and watched the fading light and turned his head from side to side or moved his hands, plucking at the sheet or twisting his fingers about one another. Israel knew what it meant to be possessed by intense restlessness, to feel the twitching of every muscle, demanding change of position, at least, and to be unable to respond by moving his body an inch. He knew, too, what it meant to be afraid, for he who had scoured the mountain all his life, fearing neither God nor man, now dreaded the approach of night, and turned his eyes apprehensively at a strange step.

The light faded, and over the mountain appeared the edge of the moon. Israel watched it rise, red at first and casting little light, then, as it mounted higher, changing into pale gold and flooding the world with a soft radiance. The dingy room was dark enough. Even the hearth showed no warm welcoming glow, and the ashes scattered upon it seemed to typify the family life by their very deadness.

Across the threshold, however, the moonlight fell brightly, even extending into the room a little way, making a path of light across the dark, uneven boards. Israel, in the shadow, watched the light. It crept further into the room as the moon climbed still higher, and the familiar household objects seemed less crude and ugly than by day.

As he looked, a shadow crossed the light. Israel gasped and looked again. In the doorway stood a figure, uncertain evidently whether to retreat or advance—a girl in a short, dark skirt and white sweater, with a basket on her arm. He had heard no step, no sound marked her approach, yet she was there. Israel struggled to sit upright, but without success. He could only lie there and stare. The girl advanced a step, turning slightly toward the hearth. He could not see her face, but down her back hung two long braids, and the moonlight touched them gently, as though it liked to linger among the glistening strands. Israel's eyes dilated with horror as he gazed. He raised his hand and pointed with shaking finger as a muffled sound escaped his lips. The girl involuntarily stepped back toward the door, then paused and again advanced. As she turned toward him, a hoarse cry escaped from his lips, and he cowered as close to his cot as possible.

"Bess!" he cried. "*Bess!*"

His voice rose to a sort of scream, and Peggy, frightened and surprised, was for the moment incapable of speech or movement.

Israel, vainly trying to draw the sheet over his head, continued to speak, his words rushing forth like water that escapes after a long obstruction.

"I did n't go for to do it, Bess—you know I did n't. I was plumb crazy. Plumb crazy because you'd gone—that's what I was. What was you doin' on the Rock in the wind and rain? Where was *he*—him that you come to meet?"

Peggy, thoroughly frightened, turned to flee, but Mrs. English met her at the door and forced her back into the light, keeping well within the shadow herself.

"Hush!" she whispered. "Don't move, don't speak. He thinks you're Bess. For God's sake, keep still!"

The voice from the cot resumed, hoarsely:

"I did n't go for to do it, my girl. When you come up to me and I pushed you away, I never meant you to go over the Rock. I was n't no kind of a father to you, Bess, but I was proud of you in my way, my handsome girl. See here!"

He groped under the pillow and produced the battered silver heart.

"I give you this, Bess, when you was a little child. It was the only thing I ever did give you, was n't it? You liked it then, and you allus wore it, but when *he* come along, you throwed away the little heart. But I found it, and I kep' it safe, though I throwed away the gold one. I was n't no kind of a father, but you was my girl, and I was proud of you. Now you're dead—dead!"

He paused, dry-lipped and shaking, and his next words burst from him in a sudden paroxysm of terror.

"I did n't go for to do it," he moaned. "Don't ha'nt me, Bess!"

Israel said no more, for merciful oblivion came to his relief, and for the first time in his heretofore rugged life he fainted.

Cynthia hastened to his side, and Marvin and Bishop Reyburn came also from their vantage-point of the window, to render what assistance they could. But Peggy, white and trembling, only sank down upon the doorstep and pressed her hands to her ears, as if to shut out the voice.

Cynthia worked over her husband with feverish zeal, and as he showed signs of returning consciousness she turned to the detective.

"Did n't I tell you he could talk?" she said. "I knowed he could if he would. Did n't I hear him mutter in his sleep?"

Marvin nodded and turned to the Bishop.

"By a strange coincidence," he said, "the very experiment I wanted to make has happened by accident. I thought it probable that the sudden appearance of a girl resembling his daughter might frighten him into speech. You know what I have been telling you about the superstitious vein in many of these mountaineers."

He stopped speaking long enough to hold a little brandy to the quivering lips, and looked critically at Israel as he did so.

"To-morrow," he said, "I will take his deposition. He will not refuse to speak, for I do not think he will last many days more. And, with your approval, Bishop, I would suggest that all the gentlemen interested, who were present at the Little Lodge on the other occasion, should be requested to be here also."

XIII.

ISRAEL was ready to speak. He lay on his cot waiting the appointed time, but his hands were folded quietly, and his eyes no longer rolled restlessly from corner to corner of the room.

Cynthia, too, was changed. Her face had softened indescribably, and her manner as she ministered to her husband was almost gentle, although she said but little.

As the afternoon waned and the hour drew near, she brought a chair and placed it close to the cot, seating herself with the manner of one who has cast her lot and knows she must abide by the consequences.

And by and by came Marvin, alert and interested, with notebook and pencil, and prepared for anything. Mr. and Mrs. Biggs arrived next, Jeremiah wizened and uncomfortable in his Sunday suit, and Mrs. Biggs rustling impressively in black silk and her best bonnet. She brought with her jelly for Israel, and had expressed the wish as she made it that it might have a bitter taste.

"For," she said, "I know my duty to the sick and afflicted, but I can't say I hope he'll enjoy it, for I have no use for such as him."

Gordon came, seated himself by the window, and made no comment. Searle and Barlow came also, looking as uncomfortable as they felt, and wishing heartily that they had never climbed the mountain that stormy afternoon. Lemuel Watkins, too, was there. He sat in sullen silence, greeting no one and looking steadily down upon the floor.

And last Bishop Reyburn appeared, bringing with him his wife and niece. Peggy had insisted on being present, claiming it her right to hear from Israel's lips the words that would forever remove the cloud that had lately hung about Archer.

"Besides," she added, "I may have something to say myself."

And Mrs. Reyburn, finding protest unavailing, had accompanied her, although, as she said, never in her life before had she been even remotely connected with anything not strictly respectable.

So they sat and waited, taxing the capacity of the cabin and utilizing doorstep and window-sills as chairs. Suddenly Jeremiah spoke, unscrewing his mouth and shooting out his words in the manner of a pop-gun.

"Mr. Archer," he said, "will not be present. He is stopping at the Lodge, and has been there for some days. He can be found there, if needed, but otherwise wishes to be excused. He told me to say to you, sir"—Mr. Biggs now addressed the Bishop directly—"that he would go to Table Rock at sunset, and you could see him there if you desired."

There seemed to be no further cause for delay, so Marvin turned toward the cot.

"Now, Mr. English," he said, "if you are ready, we will be glad to hear what you have to say."

Israel was ready, but speech was difficult. Twice he opened his mouth, then looked at his wife with mute appeal in his eyes. She immediately held a glass to his lips, and after he had sipped a little of its contents, she adjusted his pillow, even smoothing it soothingly.

"Speak up," she said. "Be a man, Israel, and speak up. Don't be afraid—nothing won't make no difference to you now. Speak up and tell the truth."

And, thus admonished, Israel spoke. He told of his walk up the mountain, carrying the bundle over his shoulder; of the cold rain that drenched him, the wind that buffeted him, and the hail that beat upon his head.

"But I did n't feel none of it," he said, "for I thought of her, and there was black hate in my heart for him and for her, too. I hated her, I did, and cussed the day she was born."

"Take it back, Israel, take it back," implored his wife. "You did n't mean it, you know you did n't."

"Up on the Rock," continued Israel, "it was more quiet-like, for it was sheltered a bit from the wind. I went to the edge and throwed off the bundle, and I says to myself that with it I throwed all thought of her. But that wa'n't true, for I thought of no one else. I felt weak-like in my knees after the bundle left my shoulder, so I set down on a stone to rest, behind the trunk of the big old oak that stands at the back of the Rock, up against the mountain. *You know.*"

Bishop Reyburn nodded. He did not think it worth while to mention that the oak no longer stood against the mountain, but lay abjectly upon it, crushed and broken, even as Israel lay upon his cot.

"Its trunk was holler inside," Israel resumed, "and after awhile I remembered it and thought I'd creep in where it might be warmer and maybe good and dry, but jest as I started I heard somebody comin'. It was *her*—Bess, y' know. It was dark, and I could n't see good, but I knowed it was her even before she spoke. She called

him." Israel pointed to the window where Gordon sat with averted face. "'Jim,' she says, 'Jim, are you there?'" But nobody answered, and so she went inside the tree, out of the rain, to wait. I crep' as close as I could, and listened, and I waited, too, for it come to me all of a sudden how I could meet him instead of Bess, and I knowed jest what I'd do."

Israel's voice grew faint, and again his wife held the glass to his lips. He drank eagerly, then resumed:

"For a while I did n't hear nothing but the wind and the rain, but I put my ear close to the tree and then I heard her cryin'. She was jest sobbin' kind of miserable and afeard-like, and talkin' out loud to herself. 'Oh, Jim,' she says, 'why don't you come? You promised—you said you'd be here, no matter what the weather was, and I'm so wet and so cold.' I reckon I moved then, for she stopped cryin' all of a sudden and listened. Then she give a call like a wood-pigeon—'Coo-ee,' she says. 'Coo-ee'—and I knowed it was their signal."

Israel paused, exhausted, and lay silent with closed eyes for some moments, then took up the thread of his story:

"I don't know now why I done it, but I answered her. I went out on the Rock in front of the tree and give the call of the wood-pigeon twicet. The next thing I knowed she was hangin' on my arm, laughin' and cryin' all together. 'You did come, dear, you did come!' she says. 'I might have trusted you.'

"But I shook her off, and when she come back to me puzzled-like I pushed her away. We must have got near to the edge of the Rock—it was black darkness, and I could n't see. But I pushed her, and she went over. Oh, my God!"

Israel's voice failed entirely, and no one spoke. Peggy was crying frankly and unreservedly, and the end of Mrs. Reyburn's nose was strangely pink, but Cynthia's eyes were dry and bright.

"You're 'most done, Israel," she said. "Try and finish."

"At first I could n't believe it, and I called her to come back. She did n't answer, and then I knowed." The words came slowly and with difficulty, for Israel English had almost reached his limit of endurance. "I went back after a while, and set down on the stone and waited for *him*. I did n't hear the wind, and I did n't feel the rain. I jest set and waited patient, for I wanted to kill him. I meant to drag him to the edge of the rock and push him off down in the ravine, along with her. But he did n't come. I waited a long time, and then come a wild blast of wind, and I heard a crash. I did n't know no more till I found myself here, with the doctor workin' over me. I thought I'd be hung for murder, and I made up my mind never to speak no more, but I did. That's all."

Israel closed his eyes and turned away his head. His story was finished, and he was very tired. He wished they would all go away and let him sleep, but Cynthia spoke abruptly, addressing Gordon:

"She trusted you, but yet you did n't go."

"You are wrong. I did go. I hardly thought she would be there such a night, but I went."

Gordon spoke with an obvious effort. His face bore the impress of sleepless nights, and certain heavy lines told their story of regret and remorse. His eyes avoided Peggy as he continued, evidently forcing himself to speak.

"I have no apology to offer, for I have been a cad and a fool. I can only say that I loved this girl—not in the right way, perhaps, but I meant to provide for her always. She—well, she knew men, and she had two of us on the string and played the other against me until I did not really know which she cared for, and I was half mad with jealousy."

"Me, too," said Lemuel abruptly. "Me, too."

Gordon glanced at Peggy's averted face and continued quickly:

"Don't think I want to put the blame where it does not belong. I am merely trying to be honest. I persuaded her to leave Glen Summit and go to New York, and we were to have started that night. When I saw how violent the storm was, I did not expect she would be able to climb the mountain, but I went, as I did not wish her to wait there alone."

"She was n't waiting on the Rock," interposed Cynthia. "She was down below in the ravine."

"I went on to the Little Lodge," said Gordon, "and was surprised to find Searle and Barlow. I heard Archer was there, but I did not see him until next morning. I did not know she—Bessie—had been there until Mrs. Biggs said so the other day, but after the scene with the boots, I suspected it, and I was furiously angry. When I heard she was dead, and how she died——"

He paused abruptly and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, where it stood in great drops.

"I don't expect any of you to understand," he said. "I'm not defending myself at all, but—well, bad lot that I am, I loved her."

"Me, too," said Lemuel, again. "Me, too."

Cynthia left her chair by the side of her husband and laid her thin, work-hardened hand on Gordon's arm.

"And me," she said simply. "There was three of us."

"I could not understand her death, but I did not for a moment believe it happened the night of the storm. I thought"—Gordon was addressing Bishop Reyburn now—"I thought that she had made a fool of me, and I have made it as unpleasant as I could for Archer

ever since. I know now that I was wrong, and I am ready to apologize. But when I saw that shoe——”

“Stop, Jim!”

It was Peggy speaking. Her voice shook a little, but became firmer as she proceeded.

“That shoe was *mine*.”

“Margaret!”

Mrs. Reyburn was incapable of further speech, and her niece continued rapidly:

“I had started to Mountain Top on the new trolley line, but I had an engagement with Mr. Archer to get out at the Little Lodge and have tea there with him. He was to come up in his motor and take me over there after we had finished tea. We thought we could get to Mountain Top before dinner, and I was to spend the night there. But the storm caught me before I reached the Little Lodge.”

“So it did,” acquiesced Mrs. Biggs, “and wet through you was.”

“Mrs. Biggs lent me some clothes and took my shoes to be cleaned. After a while I thought I would go down and sit by the fire. I knew I would have to spend the night, but I did not think Mr. Archer could get up the mountain in his motor, so I did not mention that I was expecting him.”

“No, miss,” put in Jeremiah; “you did *not* mention it.”

“When I got downstairs I found him there, and knew he also would have to spend the night. But I never thought of any one else getting storm-stayed there.”

Peggy hesitated here, then went bravely on.

“When you looked through the window,” she continued, addressing Searle and Barlow, “it was I you saw with Mr. Archer. My hair is red, you know, and I had braided it.”

Her cheeks were flaming now, but she held her head proudly erect, and her eyes challenged criticism.

“When you knocked I was startled, for, naturally, I did not wish any one to find us there alone. We did not think of the window, so we went to the kitchen and asked Mrs. Biggs if we might sit there awhile.”

“So you did,” interrupted Mrs. Biggs; “so you did. And I mended the fire, and brought the big rocker out of my room for you—a blessed lamb, if ever there was one!”

The blessed lamb had something more to say and hastened to speak.

“I should have told this long before,” she said, “but I did not know it was necessary. I can understand and appreciate Mr. Archer’s silence, but why”—she turned abruptly to Mr. and Mrs. Biggs—“why did n’t *you* say something?”

Mrs. Biggs raised her hands with an expressive gesture as Jeremiah answered:

"We kep' quiet, Miss Margaret, not wishing to drag you into public notice, as it were, when it did n't have nothing to do with the case. And we thought silence best for all parties concerned."

Peggy looked at him, puzzled and incredulous.

"I don't understand," she began, but the Bishop interrupted quietly:

"They thought they were acting for the best, my dear. And now, as the sick man must be very tired, I propose we adjourn. I think no more is necessary, Mr. Marvin."

But Mrs. English had a question to ask, standing beside her husband and with her eyes fixed upon Gordon.

"Which of 'em really done it?" she demanded of the Bishop. "Was it him that pushed her over the rock—not knowin' what he was doin'—or him that she went up there to meet?"

Israel slowly opened his eyes and turned his head.

"Yes," he said; "yes—was it me or him? Before God, which?"

Bishop Reyburn looked from one to the other, then at Gordon standing apart with bowed head. His face was drawn and haggard, showing unmistakable signs of suffering, and he seemed to have suddenly grown much older. Peggy was looking at him, her gray eyes expressing pity, perhaps, but also wonder and undoubted repulsion, for youth is intolerant always and prone to hasty judgment. The faces of the other men were grave and mask-like. Whatever they may have felt, their features expressed nothing, and the Bishop involuntarily wondered whether they, too, had in their lives secret chambers into which the world might not penetrate. But Cynthia was waiting for her answer.

"Who done it?" she insisted. "Who is responsible?"

Bishop Reyburn hesitated, then raised his hand, and instinctively they bowed their heads.

"The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face to shine upon us and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace, both now and evermore. Amen."

XIV.

At the gate of the English cabin Peggy waited for her aunt and her uncle. They had lingered to speak to Cynthia, who no longer resented sympathy or refused the help so generously offered.

"Thank you kindly," she had said, when Mrs. Reyburn suggested a nurse. "I'll be glad enough of help. It will not be long now, and I'd like him to be comfortable."

No, it would not be long. Mrs. Reyburn, looking at Israel,

realized this, and she laid her hand on Cynthia's with sudden womanly sympathy.

"I feel different to him since he's spoke," said Cynthia in a whisper. "Me and him, we had a talk last night. He's all I've got left, and he's goin' fast."

So Peggy waited at the gate, the wind touching her hot cheeks and feeling cool and refreshing. She was glad to breathe the pure outdoor air, for the cabin had been very close and stifling. She was glad also that it was all over. She was so engrossed in thought that she did not hear approaching steps, and only looked up when Gordon paused uncertainly on the other side of the gate.

"Peggy," he said, "may I speak to you?"

"What have you to say?"

"Only this: I am sorry."

"What good does it do to be sorry now?" said Peggy, with the cruelty of her twenty years, then added quickly:

"I beg your pardon, Jim—I should not have said that; but I can't help thinking it."

"You are quite right," he said. "It does no good whatever. But I am sorry just the same, and I would give everything I possess if I could go back and live the past over again."

"But you cannot do that."

"No," he acquiesced; "it is beyond recalling. But I have the future, and I mean to do my best with it."

Peggy recognized a new quality in his voice, and involuntarily responded.

"No one can do more than his best," she said gently.

"I was wondering whether you would shake hands with me and wish me luck. I have decided to go abroad for a while."

"Surely, Jim."

She extended her hand with a sweet, frank gesture, and Gordon held it for a moment in both his own.

"Peggy," he said, "there was once a man who had in his keeping for a little while a pearl of great purity. He was more accustomed to paste than precious jewels, so he did not guard and cherish it as he should have done, and after a while he lost it. Then, when it had gone from him forever, he realized its value and what its possession might have made life for him. Good-by, Peggy. Try and think of me as kindly as you can."

It was a thoughtful and silent girl that followed the Bishop and Mrs. Rayburn down the little path through the woods. The sun was setting, and the sky behind her was aglow with light and flecked with little rosy clouds. Before her was the mountain, grim and forbidding, untouched by gold or rose-color. It seemed to Peggy that

the mountain to-night suggested the realities of life, and she shrank from the thought of climbing it, in spite of what might await her on the top; but she stopped and looked long and earnestly at it nevertheless. Then she saw her aunt and her uncle waiting for her beneath the birch tree at the branching of the path, and hurried on.

"Peggy," said the Bishop, "Dick sent word that he would be on Table Rock at sunset. Would you mind going there and telling him I cannot come to-night?"

Peggy hesitated, and a soft flush came and went in her cheeks as she looked from one to the other with questioning eyes.

"And bring Richard home to dinner with you," added Mrs. Reyburn. "It has been a long time since he dined with us. Tell him I will have a place put on for him."

She walked on immediately, remarking to her husband as she picked her way carefully through twigs and dead leaves:

"I hope I am enough of a Christian, Edward, to acknowledge when I have been in the wrong. I know my duty, and my worst enemy cannot accuse me of shirking it."

Lemuel Watkins lingered in the cabin with Cynthia, and looked again at Israel, silent on his cot.

"He's goin' fast," he said, and Cynthia nodded acquiescence.

"What will become of you?"

"I dunno."

She spoke indifferently, as if the subject did not interest her.

"I've got a better cabin than this. And it's mighty lonesome nights and Sundays. I wisht you'd come look out fur me. I ain't got nobody."

"You'll find a likely girl, Lem, some day, and marry her. There's other girls in the world fur you, but not fur me."

"No, there ain't." Lemuel spoke with firm conviction. "It was allus Bess or nobody, Mis' English. But she did n't keer fur me after she knowed men like them. I was wrong about the feller, but I did n't know there was two of 'em. Bess did n't play fair, but it would n't have made no difference to me. If she'd have married me, I'd have took her anyhow. And I'd have treated her as good as any man."

"I reckon you would, Lem."

"I'd sorter like to have some of her kin around me. Will you come?"

"Cynthy"—Israel had opened his eyes and was speaking again, slowly and with difficulty—"you go with Lem. He'll look out fur you a heap better 'n I ever did."

"Jes' as you say," returned Cynthia. "I don't seem to keer nohow."

"She'll come, Lem. I ain't been over-good to her, but you'll do better, I reckon."

"Sure, I will." Lemuel leaned over the cot and spoke emphatically. "And there's somethin' else I want to say. Do you foller me?"

Israel nodded.

"I had n't eyes fur nobody but your Bess—you know that. But I don't blame you fur what you done. I'd ruther she'd be layin' quiet where she is than gone off the way she meant to do."

The eyes of the two rough, weather-beaten men met in a long glance of perfect understanding. Then Israel's eyelids drooped heavily.

"Good-by, Lem," he said, and turned toward his wife. "Cynthy, I'm awful tired."

In a secluded corner of the Country Club, Searle and Barlow reviewed the events of the afternoon.

"Upon my soul," remarked Billy, for the third time. "I was never so surprised in my life! To think of its being Peggy Carrington's shoe! Join me in a bracer, Randolph, for I feel the need of it."

Searle agreed, and the order was given.

"Women," he moralized, "are at the root of all trouble. It began in the Garden. Now, look what a devil of a row there has been here, and all traceable to two little red-haired girls. Take my advice, Billy, and keep away from 'em."

"Oh, I don't know," said Barlow thoughtfully. "I'd hate to live where I'd never hear the rustle of a skirt."

The order having arrived, Searle lifted the tall glass wherein the ice clinked pleasantly.

"To Woman," he said, "the rose that is sweetest to man and the thorn that pricks him most cruelly. Were it not for Woman, Billy, we should have nothing interesting to watch from our Club windows, or to discuss *sub rosa*. She is undoubtedly the spice of life, so here's to her! May I never have a door she does not pass—and may she keep on passing!"

XV.

It was very still on Table Rock. Now and then a squirrel crossed it, running swiftly, as if anxious to reach the haven of a hollow tree, for the air was sharp to-night, and even little furry creatures sought shelter when they slept.

Sometimes a shower of leaves drifted down from above, falling softly, as if they wished to cover the cold stone with their warmer

tones of scarlet, bronze, and gold. They had been falling now and then for some time, and the tree that once had nourished them stretched forth depleted branches, looking gaunt and haggard, as women look when those they love desert them.

A shadow fell upon the Rock, followed by the whirl of wings, as a great white owl flapped his way heavily across it. Reaching the edge of the projection, he sank upon it majestically, folding his wings with dignity, and turning his large, amber-colored eyes toward the far horizon, where a scarlet thread was visible.

Somewhere in the distance a fox barked sharply, with answering echo, and a few small stones fell upon the Rock, scattered no doubt by little feet hurrying toward safety in tree or burrow.

The scarlet thread became a ball and hung suspended in mid-air, changing from red to gold and illuminating the heavens. And the owl on the edge of the Rock blinked his amber eyes disgustedly, for the world was suddenly flooded with light, and its radiance annoyed him.

There were other sounds now. A rustling in the underbrush and the crushing of earth beneath a man's impatient feet, at which the owl looked around resentfully, as if inquiring who dared to interfere with his seclusion.

The man who emerged upon the Rock stood a moment looking off into space, with eyes that did not brighten as they gazed. He thrust his hands into his pockets, and leaned against the side of the mountain that rose abruptly from the Rock, with the manner of one at odds with life in general.

Archer had come to say good-by to his uncle, for he meant to leave Glen Summit as soon as possible. Remembering the Bishop's custom of an evening visit to Table Rock, he had come there at sunset; but his uncle had not arrived, so he waited, pondering many things.

He thought rather bitterly of Peggy. After all, he reflected, he had been mistaken in her. He would immerse himself in business and think no more about her; he would put her outside his life, and close the leaves of the book of the past. Then he straightway found himself recalling the evening at the Little Lodge. He saw the flickering light of the fire, the flush on her cheeks and the eager light in her eyes as he advanced to meet her. Again he seemed to hold her in his arms; he felt the beating of her heart and the soft warmth of her lips.

And Archer knew that he would not forget, for there are some things a man locks away in his heart and carries with him always.

"At least," he said, aloud, "I will go away without seeing her again."

But he could not do that either, for the leaves rustled a warning, the white owl retreated to the tree, and he turned to meet the girl of whom he thought.

"Dick," she said, "I have a great deal to say to you. Will you listen, and try to believe?"

After a long time the owl came back and perched upon the Rock. He wished those tiresome mortals would go away and leave him in undisturbed possession. Finally Peggy rose regretfully.

"We must go," she said, "or Aunt Julia's dinner will be quite ruined."

She stooped to tie the ribbon of her shoe, but Archer was before her, lingering over the task as though he liked it.

"I wonder," said Peggy, "what would have happened if it had not been for the Little Lodge."

"It was Fate, Peggy."

"And suppose," she continued, "the boy had not mixed up the shoes—what then? We might not be here together now. And yet, Dick, it has caused you much trouble and annoyance. Was it worth it?"

Archer pulled the ribbon into an irreproachable bow.

"God bless the little brown shoe!" he said.

And the owl, disgusted with mankind, flew away into the woods to find his mate.



LOVE'S DREAMS

BY FRANK DEMPSTER SHERMAN

WORN as the world love's themes are,
Yet it is ever true
That blossom-sweet love's dreams are,
And love forever new.

Happy the lass and lover,
For all the tales be old,
Whose hearts the dreams discover
Still waiting to be told.

There is but once to find them,
Fresh as they were of yore:
Love's night of dreams behind them,—
Love's day of dreams, before!

SHOULD THE GIFTED MARRY?

By Minna Thomas Antrim

WHY Art and Marriage should be deemed antagonistic is a vexatious problem. When a woman who has extraordinary artistry marries, straightway the public begins to prophesy. A singer, an actress, or a writer of importance rarely opens the door to Hymen without at once hearing the clamor of protest at the window.

It is alleged that great artists are chameleons in love. This is not true. The quicksand that engulfs the temperamental artist is oftenest impulse. She mistakes the flare of passion for the flame of love, forgetting that misdirected passion eventually destroys art. The emotional woman should study man as an individual before she accepts him as a husband. It is no more good for an artist to live alone than it is for lesser folk. God made a mate for everything worth-while, not only in order to reproduce the species, but that the two might be companions. Loneliness destroys more lives than war. Propinquity should not be the ground of union, however. The married Moth is foredoomed to the flame, be she where she may. It is not in her to be wise, or loyal. She has not enough soul to make even Satan long for her. She lives her silly little life, and is gone. But the big artist has a big soul. This she divides equally between her "work" and her family. And among such are few Castaways. The consecrated candle of the Gifts leads much oftener to Heaven than to the Nether World.

It is contended that the wear and tear of the emotions, and the pangs of maternity, act disastrously upon a singer's voice. Be of good cheer, O Trouble-Seeker. An emotionalist rarely feels anything long enough to make a lasting impression upon vocal chords, heart, or mind. As to the maternal end of it, in "that joy that cometh in the morning" the perilous night is quickly forgotten. So in His wisdom did God make mothers. Therefore, since one must know in order to express thrilling emotions, marriage and motherhood should vocally enrich rather than deplete a singer. When given the right of way, the gamut of human emotions broadens the mind, and deepens all life's meanings. Until she loves and is loved, the greatest artist has but

a butterfly comprehension of joy or pain. As to those "dangerous separations," if for a season she goes to fulfil the other half of her God-given destiny, is she necessarily a less faithful wife and mother? Far be it from sanity to undervalue the body of woman, but it is a fact that the true artist regards the physical part of her being as of infinitely less importance than does less gifted femininity. Verily, comeliness is part of the artistic "business." To keep her face unlined and her figure slight, she often labors, but a great actress would gladly be plainer than two pike-staffs if thereby she could add to her artistry. Oddly, where she is while working seems equally of minor importance. She lets her heart-life enthrall her absolutely when her season closes. When she begins to work she gives her mind dominion, for, being conscientious, she owes her public the best that she can give (for a large consideration, it is true). In the wee sma' hours before she sleeps, those far away are not forgotten. God knows that.



No artist can serve a selfish husband and a clamorous public satisfactorily. The very basic principle of artistic success is peace of mind, hence the artist confronted by hostile domestic conditions had better bury her talent in the Napkin of Oblivion than try to cultivate it in the House of Contentment. This by way of the selfish mate. Equipped doubly is a singer or musician whose home life is happy. True, the children of a great artist do miss their mother when she is *en tour*, but later in life they reap the splendid harvest of her powers and prestige, whereas, had she, thinking only of the present, stayed at home, grieving in secret over her wasted talent, would they have been better mothered? Wisdom often harvests late. It is, moreover, contended that great singers are supremely selfish. For the salvation of your souls, give ear, O Carpers.

Not so many years ago that thousands in their forties may not recall her, a great singer, whose golden voice was just as big and spring-clear as her soul, married. Now, he whom she married was a man, and, incidentally, at heart a boy, who had been mother-loved and indulged beyond the average by his womankind. Destiny permitted him to love and to be loved by a prima-donna who wished to continue singing, for her public adored her. Briefly, her career was in its zenith. Her husband elected to travel with her, so that those dreaded separations should not intervene. So it was for a long while. Finally, in spite of his joy in her joy, and his pride in her laurels, he grew weary of—ah, no, Sir Cynic—wearied of the divided-life. He needed her *all the time*. His love had grown so that he wanted more than he could have

of her delightful companionship. Finally the great test came. Well, have I not said her soul was as big and crystal-clear as her voice? All that she had that was most precious she gave to him, for that is how she read the book of her love and his. Regret it? Who asks does not remember her; who does, need not ask.

The actress has always been a target for all sorts of forebodings. That anything save vanity could make a wife and mother remain in or return to the profession, it would take a heaven-sent herald to trumpet. Even then good mothers would sniff, and yet Stageland has countless wives and mothers who are above suspicion of vanity, who are not so woman-like as womanly. Oddly, it is very often her love for her unsuccessful husband, and her dominating ambition for her clever children, that keep an actress before the public. It is a fact that actresses who play the role of society belles feel nauseated that such shallow worldlings should be wives and mothers. For any other part rather than such a travesty upon womanhood, would a representative actress be cast. As in the singer's case, so with the "stage favorite"; rather than see her husband struggling along in the role of Atlas, or hear her darlings vainly wishing for things that other little girls and boys have, the actress-mother spends part of the year away from the home that her talent has filled with luxuries and comforts, solely for the sake of others. Many an elderly leading woman drags a more than weary body over thousands of miles, bearing ills we know not of, not because she loves admiration inordinately, but because she wishes her loved ones to fare sumptuously every day when she is gone, and to have all that there is—anon. Unselfish love keeps an actress young, and gives her voice that delicious timbre that makes every line tell. After marriage, an actress has a thousand hidden sources from which to draw inspiration when "creating a part." One has only to note her devotion to her dog to see that the maternal instinct is not dormant. Fido is a poor substitute, but she loves him. As a mother, she is thrice careful, for who better than she knows the danger of the wrong environment for impressionable young minds. She is not a sentimentalist, but when her little ones grow older, and the wolf prowls near her girls, or the cynic would throw mud into the minds of her boys, she is a tower of strength and tact.



The writer gains as richly as the others through personal experience, —possibly in greater degree. Most women writers of extraordinary distinction are married. To whom but wives and mothers is the world indebted for those modest little masterpieces of home life that have blended laughter and tears? It is not necessarily the happy wife who

writes the best fiction, but it is still the woman who "understands." It is the woman who has drained the chalice of love. If in the bottom she has found the bitter dregs, will this not make her work the stronger after the first smart of disillusion has passed? If she has borne children and, God help her, laid them away under the great Green Coverlid, is she not piteously well-equipped to write of these little ones with a tenderness almost divine? If, on the contrary, joy has been and still is her portion, is she not the divinely appointed missioner of dual blessedness?

In those more sheltered avenues where talented women strive, marriage and art are a more serious combination. Where the finished work must be sent out from home by schedule, where absolute isolation or silence is a desideratum, the double knot has its drag-backs. Nothing short of Amazonian strength, allied to genius, can achieve notable success in Poverty Hall. Petty cares, like microbes, are underground workers for oblivion. Even a brave spirit quails before a half-empty larder and a coal-bin that echoes drearily. Housed with a happy-go-lucky, ailing, or mediocre husband, the seeker for artistic recognition is foredoomed to obscurity. True, if she has a great gift, she will succeed, because from the beginning her talent was ordained to work out the better, stronger part of her ego. If her gift is merely well indicated, she may be heard of, but not so quickly as though with unhampered mind and hands she could pursue the art in which she hopes to shine. Having wedded unwisely, it is a clever wife who considers motherhood the finest "career." It is, for one whose gift is not sufficiently great for financial betterment. Art for art's sake is only for those few who, after much tribulation and hard labor, walk among the Elect. Art for art's—and money's—sake is much more admirable at times. The wife who neglects her duties and her children while she postures before the shrine of the Immortals, is not as likely to become one of them as she who bides her time, ministering the while to the needs of dependent ones. Her opportunity may come by undreamed-of circlings. But for a woman with much liking, but little talent, for a given vocation, to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of fame persistently, while her children go underfed, and her husband goes unkempt and companionless, is criminal. That their husbands hate their work, or are jealous of their art, is the cry of these pseudo-artists. Even were it true, is it any wonder when in looking for a wife, the hapless man too often finds a stone woman?

To sum up, while it is positively heretical to insist that a great artist who marries necessarily jeopardizes her art, it is as absolutely true that a little artist jeopardizes her marital happiness by overestimating her talent.

STIGMATA

By Susie M. Best

I WAS the mother of Judas—
The night that he was born
I saw the veil of a temple rent,
And I felt a wounding thorn.

*I was the mother of Judas—
And lo! at his first wail
I heard the sound of a sullen roar,
"Thou King of Jews—all hail!"*

*I was the mother of Judas—
In childbirth's heat and jar,
The drink they put to my parchèd lips
Was hyssop and vinegar.*

*I was the mother of Judas—
When palm to palm we drew,
The flesh of my own was torn apart
As a sharp spike pierced it through.*

*I was the mother of Judas—
When at my breast he fed,
Meseemed in my side a sudden spear
Made an open wound that bled.*

*I was the mother of Judas—
When first I felt his breath,
The life-blood chilled in my veins, and I
Knew all the pangs of death.*

*I was the mother of Judas—
Ah, God! why should it be
My arms were stretched, and my feet were nailed,
And I hung on an awful Tree!*

*(I was the mother of Judas—
Thou God, who art All Good,
Bear witness, Thou, that I love my son,
Despite Thine own Son's rood.)*

THE PEREGRINE TWINS

By Hulbert Footner

I HAVE written what follows at the request of the young people principally concerned in the story. All the names have been changed, of course, and five years have passed; and since no one found it out at the time, there is small chance at this late day of the events being brought home to the real actors; and if they should be, it is no great matter now.

I was walking up the Avenue from the office on a gorgeous afternoon in October, when Bob Vesey hailed me from a taxi, and, making his chauffeur come about, drew up beside me at the curb, and commanded me to jump in. I obeyed, not a little surprised and flattered. Vesey and I had been pals at college, but, upon graduating, had set sail upon different courses. We still hung out at the same club, and were continually meeting here and there, but we had long since ceased to be at all intimate. The gilded favorite of fortune, with his good looks, his high spirits, and his millions, could hardly be expected to have much in common with a plodder like me. But I had never ceased to be fond of him, and from my humble corner had enjoyed the spectacle of his gay and triumphant progress. He was not conspicuous for modesty after five years of this, and they said he carried things with a high hand—but how could anything different have been expected?

Bob lost no time in coming to the point: "Orford, you have a tungsten mine in Colorado, have n't you?"

"Merely a good prospect," I said.

"What's holding it back?"

"I need a good man to go out there," I said. "Can't go myself, and can't afford to hire the right kind."

He flicked his gloves on his knee with a touch of diffidence that seemed strange in him. "Suppose I went in with you on the deal; would you—would you call me a good man to go out there?"

I stared. "What!" I exclaimed. "And leave all this?" I waved my hand over the splendid passing show. The lovely ladies were singling out our cab with an eager kindness they did not display when I rode alone.

"Sure thing!" he said.

I suppose I continued to look incredulous.

"It's not just a case of sore head," he went on. "It's been stewing for a long time. 'All this,' as you call it, has got on my nerves. I'm sick of the empty bustle, the futile bumming about from noon until sunrise. The Avenue and the Great White Way don't represent life. I want to get down to tacks."

"Good business!" I said encouragingly.

He looked at me frankly, almost shyly. "I'm going to keep at you till I prove I'm in earnest. Any way, I hope we can see more of each other. We've sort of drifted apart lately, but I've always admired you, Tom. You stand on your own bottom. Hope you don't think I'm balmy—talking like this. The fact is, I've had a change of heart, as they say. It's been coming on a long time, and something clinched it. I'll tell you some time."

"*Cherchez la femme*," I said to myself.

Bob was as good as his word, and during the next few days we saw a lot of each other. Frank and boyish as ever, he was for no half-measures, but gave me his confidence completely. He looked into tungsten, and offered to take a half-interest on the spot, but I wanted to hold off until I was sure this was more than a passing impulse. One learns to be indulgent with the rich.

It was about two weeks later that we met at the Onderdonk cotillion, the first large affair of the season, given to introduce some niece or another. We made our bows together, and once more it was made clear to me that my social quotations jumped twenty points when I was in company with Bob Vesey.

"Mr. Vesey, Mr. Orford, so good of you to come!" said Mrs. Onderdonk, that superb matron—bracketing us to save time. "You must both come back to me by and by, for I want to introduce you to my niece, Miss Bushrod of Virginia, who is going to turn all your heads! Beautiful, spirited, and distractingly unconventional—so look out for yourselves!"

With the usual inane smiles, we backed away from her large, playful forefinger, and Bob, slipping his arm through mine, led me downstairs again. He knew the house.

"The bright particular star of the evening is evidently late in rising," he said carelessly. "We'll have half an hour before the jamboree commences. Let's have some smoke and talk."

We found two padded chairs in the corner of the vast, dim billiard-room, and lit up.

"Still strong for the higher things of life?" I queried facetiously.

"Still leery of me, I see," he returned.

He drew his chair closer to mine. "Look here, Tom, I'm going to

tell you what happened to me last month," he said impulsively. "You're the only one I care to have know about it."

"Fire away!" I said, more pleased with his confidence than I would show. His story follows.

I went up to Wanaque in August to spend a month with my family. As a matter of fact, I stayed only three days, and they are all sore on me—but that's where the story comes in. I was motoring over to Tuxedo to play polo when it happened. Do you know that country? Rather decent roads. I burst a tire half way up a long hill over the Ramapo Mountains, and was stalled for an hour. God-forsaken country: hills, stones, and scrub—no house in miles. Well, there I sat, smoking, and cursing my luck, and envying Trudeau while he worked—he's my mechanic, and he gets a heap more out of life on his twenty-five per than I do on my twenty-five hundred—when suddenly I heard a woman's voice below.

It was one of those rich mezzos that draw the very heart out of your breast, and the song was a teasing, dreamy Southern lullaby—'pon my word, Tom, it made a shiver of delight run up and down my spine. I looked over my shoulder and saw an old white horse drawing a shabby wagon, like a grocer's delivery, come slowly around a bend in the road. The song was suddenly called in. You can imagine how eagerly I waited for the outfit to come up.

Presently I made out that two youngsters sat on the seat—boy and girl. They looked very much alike, both slim, dark, and ardent; brother and sister undoubtedly, and probably twins; but while he was only a boy, she was woman complete—and *such* a woman! By Gad! when she raised her eyes they shone like two fireflies in the dusk, and her mouth was the most perfect shape of red in the world. She carried a three-seasons-old hat like a crown, and wore a faded print dress like a blooming creation. But it was her eyes that got you: brave, defiant, and clear; they were the eyes of a youngster who would dare anything.

As they drove by, she glanced at me with perfect candor and blankness, while the boy kept his eyes self-consciously in front of him. The wagon had a dingy white canvas top without any lettering, and different-shaped bundles stuck out behind, as if the young couple were moving. The horse was a good horse, and well fed, but old. I can see the outfit now!

Have you ever had a perfectly insane impulse, and given way to it? Probably not. You must remember I was sitting there absolutely disgusted with the world as I found it when this lovely young creature with the celestial voice came along in her old clothes, giving off the joy of living like a radiator in a frosty room. Without a second

thought, I grabbed my suit-case—I was going to stay to dinner and dance—and hopped out on the road. “When you get her blown up, take the car back,” I said to Trudeau. “I’ll walk. It’s only a few miles.”

I overtook the grocer’s wagon before it got to the top of the hill. As I came alongside, the girl looked at me sidewise with a little twinkle. I suppose I made a comical figure, walking along in my polo togs, with a white blanket coat over all, but I did n’t care, because I saw that she liked me—you can’t mistake that look. It keyed up my nerve.

“How do you do?” I said, lifting my cap to Brother. “I am Robert Vesey. I’m on my way to Tuxedo to play polo, and my car has broken down. Will you give me a lift?”

The boy pulled up. He was inclined to be suspicious of me, but was perfectly polite. “We are going to New City,” he said; “but we can put you half way along your road.”

He insisted on giving up his place to me, while he sat on the foot-board, with his feet on the shafts. He was diffident and ill at ease, but the girl beside me made friends instantly, like a fearless, well-bred child.

“We have heard of you, Mr. Robert Vesey,” she said, a little mockingly.

“In the newspapers,” added her brother.

“You must n’t believe all you read,” I said, a bit anxiously.

She laughed. “I’m glad to have had a look at you,” she said.

In order to change the subject, I remarked about the song I had heard.

“Did you like it?” she said carelessly.

I begged her to go on with it, and without any fuss she lifted her breast, and poured out those warm, velvety tones, while I sat beside her, quite foolish with delight.

“Join in the chorus, Pen,” she said, prodding her brother.

He had a boyish baritone, not quite past the reedy stage, but fresh and true.

“Do you sing?” she asked me abruptly, when she had come to the end.

I saw it was as sure a way as any to win their hearts, and I promptly gave them the Mermaid, and taught them the rollicking chorus. I followed it up by teaching them the glees we sang at college, and long before the old white horse reached the fork of the roads we were singing and laughing together like three old chums. The boy forgot his diffidence, and, climbing astride the old horse, faced us and beat time. The woods rang with our foolish laughter—hers was like a peal of golden bells, Tom. I tell you there is nothing to break the ice like singing together.

I suppose it's because I'm a kid at heart myself that I know how to win them. Any way, when we got to the dividing of the roads, they made no secret of their regret. To delay the moment of parting, they asked me to share their lunch, and down we sat in the grass, and ate bread and jelly, ginger-snaps and apples. Never tasted anything so good in my life.

You can imagine I was full of curiosity concerning my charming young friends—who and what they were—but on that subject they were mum. They seemed like our kind right enough, but, then, there were the shabby old clothes to account for, and, besides, you could hardly imagine any of our youngsters being allowed to gypsy it on the roads, however they might want to. Finally, part of the secret came out.

"That Mermaid song would be a good thing to work in when we strike the seaside," remarked the girl.

"Work in?" I queried.

"We have n't introduced ourselves, have we?" she said, with her provoking smile. "We're the Peregrines' travelling show: moving pictures, plantation melodies, and palmistry. We show in New City to-night, Haverstraw Wednesday, Tompkins Cove Thursday, Highland Falls Friday, and Cornwall on Saturday—just the little places."

That was kind of a knockout blow, Tom. The thought of such a jolly, wandering life was in itself maddeningly attractive at that moment—and then to be with her all day! 'Pon my word, for a moment I was, as the story-tellers say, dumb with longing. Then I had insane impulse number two. I should have hesitated before trying it on with sophisticated grown-ups, but you know youngsters have open minds.

"Take me with you," I stammered.

The boy looked startled, the girl demure.

"You have to play polo this afternoon," said she.

"It was only a practice game—they can get a dozen in my place," I said. "I can telephone or wire from the first town."

"Would you come in those clothes?" she asked teasingly.

"Sure thing!" I said. "It would call attention to the show."

She laughed.

"I have evening clothes in the bag, that I could wear at the concerts," I added. "I'll sing, and take tickets, and work the picture machine. I'll travel ahead of the show and make arrangements. You simply can't get along without me."

The boy turned me down flat. It was his sister he was thinking of, I could see, and I respected him for it. Nevertheless, I was determined to go. I wheedled and cajoled and made him laugh. He was a manly kid, but he was no match for one so much older. No one can resist

me when my heart is set on a thing. I beat him down with my good humor, and he began to weaken at last.

"We make very little," he objected, with a frown.

"Good heavens! I don't want to *make* anything!" I cried.

"If you did come, we should insist on your taking your share," he said stiffly.

I saw it would be useless to press that point. "Very well," I said; "but not a whole third, for you are supplying the outfit. I'll take one-fifth, and you two-fifths each."

"Let me consult with my sister," he said.

I jumped up and left them together. I had no doubts about what she would say, for I thought she was pretty strong for me. Ye gods! what a delightful time I was promising myself on the road! Presently they called me back, and I saw that it was all right. I was engaged for a week's trial, and we hit the trail for New City.

Well, Tom, I made good at the very first stand. My polo togs alone created a sensation in that humble village, and a crowd followed me whenever I stepped out-of-doors. At night we'd have had to hang out an S. R. O. sign—only there was n't any. It was the most they had taken in anywhere, they said.

The program opened with the pictures, and I made myself useful clawing rag off the ivories. Before that, it seems, they had had only a banjo. Then came the musical numbers. Oh, you should have seen that precious pair of kids tipped back in their chairs on the little stage, strumming banjos, and crooning their lazy, darky songs! The boy wore a tight dress-suit of the vintage of 1870 or thereabouts, and the girl had on a muslin dress with red ribbons, almost as old-fashioned, but mighty becoming. Without the awful hat she had worn in the cart, she looked doubly adorable. I closed the bill with the Mermaid, and afterwards Peggy, in a gypsy make-up, read the yokels' palms for a quarter a throw. Did I tell you her brother called her Peggy?

The only blot on our enjoyment was the hotel. All village hotels are much alike. However, when we set out in the early sunshine, that was all forgotten. The finest thing was camping at noon. On this day we chose the summit of a grassy hill, with half of Rockland County spread at our feet, in a hazy green panorama. I built a fire, and Peggy baked scones in a frying-pan before it. How sweet it was to lie in the grass and watch her bustling about! She was conscious of my admiring eyes, and a little confused, but she liked it.

Pen and I were the best of friends, too. The nicest thing about those youngsters was the implicit way in which, having once taken me into partnership, they trusted me. Surely that was the best defense their inexperience could have had, for none but an out-and-out ruffian could have dreamed of betraying their confidence. At the same time,

when I realized the extent of their innocence, I was glad it was I that was looking after them, instead of some of the men I knew.

That was my life for three delightful weeks. Business was uniformly good. In Haverstraw, particularly, we did so well that I arranged to play a return date, and we opened an account in the local bank. The jumps between villages were short, so we loafed all day on the road, footing it for the most part, and lingering in our noonday camps. Often we got innocently drunk on fresh air and sunshine, and on deserted stretches of road would give ourselves up to foolishness, singing at the top of our lungs, and laughing just for the sake of laughing. Other times we became just as serious, and evolved weighty theories of life over the camp-fire.

It seemed to me that I found something I had lost for years; that I had not really lived before since I was a kid. And to read the papers you'd think that Mrs. Onderdonk's cotillion represented the quintessence of life. What a delusion! Give me the woods and the green fields and my wilful Peggy to make love to—all the while making believe not to. I was just drifting; I felt sure I had only to hold up my finger and she would come to me, but I held off; it was such fun to tease her by pretending I did n't care.

In one way, my young friends were as reticent as they were frank in another. Tempt them as I might with confidences of my own, I never got anything about their antecedents from them in return. I did not even succeed in learning their name. Whenever I addressed Peggy as Miss Peregrine, she merely showed all her beautiful white teeth in a provoking smile. I made up my mind they must have come of first-rate old stock, which had dropped out of the race. There are lots like that—salt of the earth, you know, but poor and obscure, and no longer able to keep up appearances.

Meanwhile the weather continued fine, and the young September moon began to come out o' nights. In one village, which shall be nameless, we finally reached the limit in the way of a hotel. One sniff was enough for Peggy.

"I will not sleep in such a beery, sawdusty, stale-cabbage hole, and that's flat!" she announced.

"There's no help for it," said Pen.

"The stores are still open," said Peggy. "You can buy blankets. We'll camp out, and I'll cook for you. I'll sleep in the wagon, and you two can roll up by the fire."

"Bravo!" I cried. I was thinking of the moonlight.

But when I saw how genuinely distressed young Pen was at the idea, I had not the heart to encourage her any further. I left them to have it out between them—secretly hoping that she would get her way. It was a hotly-contested battle—they were very much alike, and

evenly matched—but in the end the blankets were bought. Then my conscience did reproach me for not having thrown the weight of my influence on his side. It was a harum-scarum thing to do; but, as you have guessed, we were all slightly mad by this time, and no longer able to see things straight. And, really, the prospect of camping out with Peggy was so enchanting, I had not the strength of mind to oppose it. Any way, the proprieties were duly observed as long as her brother was along—at least, that was what I told myself.

Having won the first engagement, Peggy followed up her advantage, and for three nights running we camped out. Oh, Tom, what nights—the happiest of my life! Once we pitched at the edge of a meadow, with a grove of pine trees behind us; once with a little river making a pleasant song beyond the fire, and once on top of a hill, with a whole sea of moonlight beneath us. It was so fine we could not bear to go to bed; only Pen, who, like most boys of his age, was a good sleeper, would always drop off after supper, leaving Peggy and me to talk by the fire.

There she would sit with a coat thrown over her shoulders, her arms around her knees, and the firelight rosy on her face. I suddenly found that unexpected forces were at work within me; that I was being pulled up by the very roots. I lost my serene feeling of mastery; it was now she who had me on the run. In the midst of our slang and laughter, a terrible hunger for her would strike me dumb. I forgot about the difference in our positions. I only wanted her.

And she was clever, Tom! One night I said, "Peggy, I'm getting sentimental."

"Don't, Bob!" she said. "I hate taffy!"

She had made an effort to keep up the forms, but on the road together as we had been, it was impossible. It was "Peggy" and "Bob" by this time.

"I'm the taffy, and you're the fire," I said. "If they put me near you, I must begin to bubble."

"Well, don't boil over, or you'll get burnt," she said calmly; "and burnt taffy has a horrid smell!"

The last night was the camp on the hill. You should have heard the crickets and the katydids and the whip-poor-wills, and all the little bugs and birds in their symphony concert. Peggy seemed gentler this night, and I felt more sure of myself, and able to lord it over her again. We were disputing about her palmistry stunt; she never could be got to admit that there was any faking in it.

"Dare you to read mine," I said, holding it out.

"Can't see it," she said evasively. "The fire flickers so."

I put on a hardwood stick that presently made a clear, bright flame "Now try!" I said.

She still shook her head. "I don't like to read the hands of people I know. I confuse what I know about them in other ways, with what I see in their hands."

"I don't care," I said. "Tell me what you know about me, however you've learned it."

She looked at me oddly. "Do you want the truth?" she asked.

"Go as far as you like," I said.

She bent her head over my hand. She did not take it in hers, as I hoped she would. There was something remote and inscrutable in her face; I had the feeling that some goddess had dropped down from her star to tell me my fate—but, goddess or not, I meant to pay her with a kiss.

This is the gist of what she told me, Tom: "I see good fortune—health, wealth, and many friends. A greater capacity for receiving friendship is indicated, than for returning it. This is the hand of a dabbler in life, of one who has never been obliged to form a steady purpose and to stick to it. Many amiable qualities are shown, but the directing Will is absent. Vanity is strong—the insidious kind of vanity that affects to despise the flattery it thrives upon."

You see, I have not spared myself, Tom, in telling you. But fancy the daring of a girl of nineteen to tell me that to my face! And I thought she was in love with me! It was like an icy shower, and I shivered under it. Then the reaction set in, and I tingled all over. I was furious, but she met my eyes unflinchingly.

"It's true," she said.

In my heart I loved her a hundred times more for her courage. She was no longer a pretty youngster to be indulged, but the one woman in the world for me. I braced my shoulders.

"Give me credit for taking it like a man," I said.

She looked at me in a startled way. "Don't you hate me for telling you?" she asked.

I shook my head. "I think you're the pluckiest woman I ever met," I said. And then—well, with all the eloquence I could muster, I asked her to marry me.

She turned me down, Tom. She said, "I would never marry the kind of man who takes women for granted."

"I've had my lesson," I said. "No danger of that now."

"There's another reason—more important," she said. "I will never marry outside of my own position in life."

I'll spare you the rest of it. I expect I acted a good deal like the spoiled child who is denied the moon. She never wavered; the best she would say was that if we ever met as perfect equals, I might ask her again.

That's the end of the story. I left them next morning. But the

lesson I learned is still strongly before me. That's why I'm going to Colorado to **work**.

When Bob finished his story, we sat smoking in silence. We had the big billiard-room entirely to ourselves now. There was nothing I could say that would improve the situation, so I simply clapped him on the shoulder to show my sympathy.

Presently little Jennison came bustling up to us, puffing out his cheeks like a chipmunk. In our hearts we cursed him.

"Been looking all over the house for you," he said importantly. "Mrs. Onderdonk asked me to bring you to her—you and Orford."

"Come on, let's get it over with," Bob whispered; and we went upstairs.

The débutante had her back to us as we entered the room. It was a slim and beautiful back, and on top of it was poised a little, black-wreathed head as graceful as a flower. She was clad in a wonderful arrangement of dark blue and silver. As Mrs. Onderdonk spoke our names, the girl turned with a dazzling smile—not for me!

Bob's hands dropped to his sides, and he went perfectly white—then crimson.

"You!" he stammered.

She dropped him a funny little curtsy. "Mr. Vesey and I are old friends," she said to Mrs. Onderdonk.

As they walked away together, I heard Bob say, "You witch! Did you know all the time that you would meet me here?"

She said, "I decline to answer."

I had no more speech with Bob during the evening, though, Heaven knows, I heard of nothing else. His devotion to the beautiful Miss Bushrod furnished sensational matter to the wagging tongues. Towards morning, as I was getting my things in the dressing-room, I ran into him.

"I assume the Colorado trip is off," I said slyly.

Bob was in a kind of happy trance. "Not on your life!" he said, squeezing my hand until the bones cracked. "Only—I can't go quite so soon. I—I've got to get married first. She's coming, too."

I clapped him on both shoulders this time.

"Orford," he said, trying to be very stiff and formal, but beaming all over, "if you have formed any inferences from what I told you to-night, I'm sure I can depend on you to keep them to yourself."

I laughed and beat him on the back again.



FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND

By Thomas L. Masson

I N the gossip corner of the club, at four-thirty in the afternoon, a small group of men were discussing—

"No, I understand that Polly Price is not engaged to Stetnic yet, but she will be soon," said Colter.

"Where does Paul Payton come in?" asked Semms.

"He does n't come in; he goes out," said Wallingford. "You see, it's quite simple. Paul has been in love with Polly for no end of time—several weeks, in fact—and the thing was to have come off, but it developed that Paul did n't have cash enough—you know he was cleaned out in Union Pacific. Well, now, along comes Stetnic, with loads of it, and Polly's people have been bringing pressure to bear on her."

"Why should n't they?" said Semms. "Those two are exactly fitted for each other. Stetnic is a fine fellow, and the two families are on the same plane. It's a good, common-sense alliance."

"Can't agree with you, quite," said Colter. "You must remember that Paul is a fine fellow, too."

"None finer."

"Very well. This is a love-match pure and simple, and we see too few of them nowadays. Polly is a star. Now, the idea of a little lack of money coming between them! It's ridiculous. It is n't as if he had n't always had it. Besides, she has enough and to spare for both of them. Why, then, should she be induced to marry a man she does n't care for, just because it seems a common-sense arrangement?"

Colter leaned forward and reduced his voice to a whisper.

"I know something about this affair," he said. "It's a question of five hundred thousand."

"What is?" asked Semms.

"Her marriage with Paul. Her father says that if Paul can raise five hundred thousand and show it to him, he will give his consent. Otherwise, he will insist on her marrying Stetnic, who is, by the way, crazy about her."

"Why don't *you* let him have the money?" said Semms, with a satiric smile. "You seem so much interested."

"That's what I am going to do."

Every man started as he looked at Colter in astonishment.

"Let him have it?" repeated Semms. "You must be joking."

"Never was more serious in my life. You believe that I have it?"

Colter was known as a several-times millionaire, with a rather close reputation, however.

"Oh, you have it all right," said Wallingford; "but what is the inducement?"

"Perfectly simple if you stop to think of it. Payton is one of my dearest friends. So is Polly. I know that she would n't be happy with Stetnic, especially as she is in love with Paul. Very well. If five hundred thousand is going to set the whole thing right, and make two people happy for the rest of their lives, do you suppose that I would hesitate? But I want you fellows to help me out."

"What to do?"

"Paul is coming in now."

Colter put his hand down to his side, where there was a patent-leather bag.

"The money is here, in thousand-dollar bills. Now, I want you to take him aside and hand it over to him. Tell him that it has been placed in your hands by a friend, who gives it to him freely until such time as he can pay it back conveniently. Explain that this friend does n't want his name known. Tell him the plain truth as I have told it to you, only don't give my name away. Here it is. I must n't be seen with you."

Colter handed the bag to Semms, and disappeared before there was time to reply. In an instant Paul Payton came into view in the corridor. The two men, with the money in the bag between them, looked at each other in consternation.

"What do you make of it?" asked Semms.

"There is no knowing," replied Wallingford, "what fool things some men will do! The idea of Colter giving away anything! It is too funny! On the other hand, I never knew him to go back on his word. Let's see——"

He picked up the bag, opened the catch, and put his hand inside.

"It's there," he whispered, holding the bag out to Semms.

"By Jove! So it is. Crammed with one-thousand-dollar bills. Well, my boy, let's get this painful affair over. I'll get Paul."

In a moment he returned with Payton. The three men made their way into a private dining-room, where Wallingford turned the key.

"Old man," he said to Payton, who looked at them in surprise, "don't be insulted if I seem to pry into your affairs, for I assure you there will be an explanation at the end. But I understand that you are in love with Miss Polly Price."

Payton smiled.

"I was," he said grimly, "up to——"

"Yes, we understand fully. Her father has broken off the match, and, if his plans mature, he will marry her to Stetnic. He has stated to you that if you had money—a little matter of five hundred thousand dollars—he would consent to your marriage with her. But he has some ambitions for her, or is controlled by her mother, we don't know which. At any rate, that's the situation."

"How did you know all this?" asked Payton.

"From a friend of yours, who wishes to remain incognito. He wants you to accept the money, so that you may marry the girl that you are entitled to by all the laws of love."

Wallingford drew forth the bag and turned the contents out on the table.

"Semms and I," he said, "have been deputed to turn this money over to you, from an unknown friend, and to say that you can keep it as long as you like after your marriage."

Payton remained silent for a long time. He looked at the bundle of bills as they had been dumped out on the table. He looked alternately into the faces of his friends. He looked out of the window at the endless procession of automobiles. Then he turned to Wallingford and said quietly:

"I'll accept this money on one condition."

"What is that?"

"That you meet me here to-morrow afternoon at this hour."

"We'll be here."

The next morning Payton made his appearance at the office of Price & Company. He carried a bag in his hand. He was admitted to the inner office after a slight delay.

"Good morning, Mr. Price."

"Good morning, Mr. Payton. What can I do for you?"

"The last time I saw you, you were good enough to state frankly that you preferred not to have me marry your daughter, because I had not cash enough."

"You put it bluntly, but that was the idea. I have a high regard for you personally, and——"

"Oh, I know all about that. It was, I believe, a little matter of five hundred thousand dollars."

"Yes."

"I have come with it."

Payton opened up his bag.

"Here is the money," he said.

Price looked at the packages of bills, all neatly laid together.

"How do I know that is really your money?" he said. "You might have borrowed it."

Payton turned red with anger.

"There is only one way to prove that," he replied. "I propose to turn this money over to you as a guarantee of good faith. Just give me a receipt for it, and if I don't marry your daughter, you can turn it back to me. Does that answer your objection?"

"Perfectly."

"And you will now keep your word?"

"Certainly."

Price smiled. There was a mystery about this affair that he did not understand, but it was evident that there was nothing else for him to do. He was too good a sport to go back on his word.

"You are entirely at liberty to marry my daughter," he said.

"Good! Do you mind writing me a note to that effect?"

"I don't understand."

"I simply want to show it to Polly."

"Certainly." Price scribbled:

DEAR POLLY:

It's all right. You can marry bearer.

DAD

and handed it to Payton.

An hour later that young man faced Miss Polly Price in her home. Silently he handed her the note. She read it and turned on him her flashing eyes.

"I knew it would be all right," she whispered.

"But it is not all right."

"What do you mean?"

"Do you suppose that I would marry a girl who, in the first place, would consent to give me up just because I did not have money enough?"

"But Papa——"

"I know that your father insisted upon it, but that does not matter. If you had really loved me you would never have consented to such a base bargain. I just wanted to prove that both you and he were capable of such a thing. Now I shall take this letter back, get my money from him, return it to the man I borrowed it from for twenty-four hours, and congratulate you upon your approaching marriage to Stetnic. Good-by."

She threw herself upon him in a passion of tears.

"You must not!" she said. "Don't you know that I have always loved you? It is not true that I submitted."

"But does not this prove it? Isn't the fact that you are now willing to marry me, when yesterday you were not——"

"You forget that yesterday I merely asked for time to consider——"

"And is not that enough? You were too ready to marry the highest

bidder. As between the two of us, you might prefer me, but it was only when I produced the necessary cash."

"Paul, you are unreasonable. You don't understand. Oh, dear! I cannot explain. Won't you believe me?"

But he rushed away from her and started down once more to her father's office. He must keep that engagement at the club, and return the money.

Suddenly, as he ran up the steps of Price & Company, a hand was laid on his shoulder. It was Wallingford.

"Old man, don't!"

"Don't what?"

"Don't go in there. I have my car right here. Rushed like mad to intercept you. Got a hurry call from the man who put up that money. He says under no circumstances must you go anywhere until you have seen him."

"Where is he?"

"At the club."

"Who is he?"

"You will know when you get there."

"But I must go up-stairs and get the money."

"No! Not now. You may afterwards, if you wish. But you are bound to obey his request first. Come! Jump in."

In another instant they were whirling up to the club.

As they entered, both Semms and Colter were waiting for them. Semms took Payton by the arm, and they filed into the same room where they had passed over the money on the day previous.

"You?" said Payton to Colter. "Can it be possible, old man, that you——"

Colter smiled at Wallingford.

"I gave you the money, did n't I?" he said.

"You certainly did. And I can't thank you enough," said Payton, "but——"

Colter smiled again.

"Don't thank me," he said. "Thank Miss Price."

"What do you mean?"

"She gave me the money to give to you."

"Where did she get it?"

"From her father. She did n't propose to give you up for a little matter of five hundred thousand, and he agreed with her. He has it back now all right."

Payton looked at him in amazement.

"Why, I thought her father wanted Stetnic to marry her."

Colter smiled for the third time.

"Nonsense!" he said quietly. "It was her mother."

AUSTIN'S EMBARRASSED BUTLER

By Keble Howard

I.

"I THOUGHT you would have run down to see her before this," said Austin, trying hard to look aggrieved. (When I assure you that he was literally swollen with pride, you will realize what a dismal failure he made of the attempt. Austin has brought so many of his grievances to my rooms that it has become a habit with him to conjure up a sense of injury as he mounts the stairs. I should, perhaps, write "had," for this was the very last time that my unoffending body was to be used as a buffer between my young friend and his—well, let us say the world.)

"My dear chap," I replied, "I hardly realized that she was prepared to receive visitors at present."

"Prepared to receive visitors?" Austin chuckled. "They've been all round her like a swarm of bees for the last fortnight—hundreds of 'em."

"You amaze me!"

"Flattering her no end, especially her toes. I'm given to understand that she has the most perfect set of toes in the world."

"Oh!" It was my turn to chuckle. "You're talking about the baby?"

"Of course I am, you idiotic old duffer! Whom else should I be talking about?"

"Quite so. Only, I happened to be thinking of Celia, you see."

There was just a touch of reproof in my tone. Austin squirmed under it, as he always does.

"Well," he retorted, "you can't suppose I've forgotten her, do you?"

"That would be impossible," I said solemnly. "It would be equally impossible, at this time of all times, for there to be any shade of misunderstanding between you."

"Precisely," replied Austin, rather uneasily.

He rose from his chair, lit a cigarette, and took it across to the

window. When you know people very well, you can generally tell what they are thinking about without seeing their faces. I was sure, from the set of Austin's shoulders, that he and Celia were holding different opinions on some point. This was a pity. Loath as I felt to hurl my unfortunate self into the breach, I felt, nevertheless, that I ought to do what I could—for the last time.

"Out with it," I said, laying my hand on his shoulder.

"Out with what?"

"Heaven knows!"

"Are you a Socialist?" he asked, turning on me with sudden defiance.

"Not a scientific one."

"That means that you sympathize, in a vague sort of way, as everybody does, with the lower classes."

"I hope it means a little more than that."

"Well, would you go out of your way to do something almost foolhardy on the face of it for the sake of your sentiments with regard to the lower classes?"

"That sounds rather like a quotation."

"Never mind what it sounds like. Would you or would n't you?"

"My dear Austin, I'm not going to commit myself by answering any question so indefinite. Give me a straightforward proposition, and I'll give you a straightforward answer."

"In strict confidence, mind!"

"Certainly."

"Would you engage an ex-convict as your butler?"

So this was it. They had differed over Prison Reform. Celia, of course, would be ready to yearn over the ex-convict, whilst Austin would have a natural and very proper regard for the wedding-presents, my set of handsome entrée dishes among them. I sincerely wished that he had settled the point for himself.

"What was his crime?" I asked carelessly.

But he was too quick for me. "Whose crime?"

"Did n't you say that you were thinking of engaging an ex-convict as your butler?"

"No; I asked you if you would."

"That depends upon what the man had done, and whether he had done it more than once."

"Suppose he were a burglar who had been convicted three times for stealing his employer's goods?"

"I'm afraid I should be inclined to think that he would do it a fourth time. You know yourself the force of habit."

"Celia," he continued, blandly ignoring my gentle suggestion, "has set her heart on taking an ex-convict and giving him a new

start in life. As we have decided that we shall need a butler in our new house, that creates a vacancy for an ex-burglar."

"Could n't you get another variety of convict? A nice ex-forgery, for example."

"There are n't any who have been brought up as butlers. They're generally bank-clerks or something of that sort, and we've no vacancy for a bank-clerk. We had an application from a man who had assaulted the police with violence on two or three occasions, but Celia could n't fancy him with the baby about. So it gradually worked round to Tily."

"What's he like? Have you seen him personally?"

"Oh, yes; two or three times. He's frightfully repentant and all that. The prison chaplain swears by him. Says he made him librarian this last time and never missed a single book."

"Books are not silver spoons," I said, meaning entrée dishes.

"That's just it. I put that point to the chaplain—quite a man of the world. He has a theory that the criminal instinct is a sort of microbe that gradually works right through the system and then leaves the subject immune. He is confident that Tily is immune."

"And Celia agrees with him?"

"Absolutely. I never knew her so keen on anything. She says that when we're so happy ourselves it's our duty to make others happy, and that she'll never forgive me if I don't engage Tily."

"Then that settles it," I said. "In any case, it must be most interesting."

II.

I was introduced to the new butler about three weeks later, having been asked to dine and sleep at the new house. There was no particular reason why I should stay the night, the train-service being excellent up to a late hour. I raised no objection, however, realizing, as I do, that it is one of a bachelor's duties to keep spare bedrooms well aired.

I took rather a fancy to Tily. He was a little man, gray-haired, very wiry, with a whimsical cast of countenance that denoted the philosopher. Had it not been for a certain furtiveness in his movements, and a watching look about the eyes, I should never have supposed that he had spent so many years of his life in convict-prisons. I admired Austin and Celia as much for their enterprise as for their kindness of heart. It certainly adds a touch of excitement to life to let an expert cracksman loose in one's house. I was quite startled to notice how easily he solved the mysteries of the patent lock that fastens my suit-case.

I was taken up to the nursery to see the baby.

"A strange contrast!" I murmured, having lied as much as I deemed necessary as to the marvellous beauty and stupendous size of the child.

"Contrast!" retorted Celia. "What d'you mean? She's the very image of me, is n't she, Nurse?"

Nurse smiled. She was the very latest thing in nurses, and enjoyed her Nietzsche as she rocked the bassinet.

"One certainly detects the maternal influence in the facial formation," she said.

"I was not alluding to the appearance of the child," I explained, "but to her youth and innocence."

"Compared with whom?" asked Celia icily. "Austin? Myself? Nurse?"

"Good gracious, no! Poor old Tily!"

Celia took the infant into her arms and held it tightly. "I think you're perfectly horrid!"

I never attempt to explain myself to young mothers. I simply slid out of the nursery and rummaged around for the new study.

"I'm glad you've come," said Austin. "I forgot to warn you that you must be very careful indeed what you talk about before Tily."

"Does he gossip?"

"Oh, it is n't that, but you can easily understand that there are some subjects on which he is very sensitive."

"You may rely upon my discretion."

"Good! And if you do happen to get onto dangerous ground, I'll just give you a warning kick under the table."

"Thanks very much," I said.

We were rather silent at first. I thought of twenty or thirty subjects that seemed safe enough, but the table was a small one, and I knew that Austin was keeping in touch with the disposition of my ankles. With the first glass of champagne, however, the tension slackened.

"Have you," I asked, turning to Celia, "been doing much reading lately?"

"Not very much," she replied, frowning slightly. The next moment, Austin's heel came down sharply on my toes.

"What's wrong with that?" I whispered as Tily retired to the sideboard with the fish.

"Librarian at Dartmoor!" hissed my host.

I thought it rather hard that they should be forever debarred from talking about books in Tily's presence, not to say a little ridiculous. Still, perhaps it would be better to let somebody else introduce the next topic.

"Well, old man," said Austin presently, "what d'you think of the house, now that you've seen it at last?"

"It's very nice," I said safely.

Celia pouted. "Is that all you have to say?"

I was about to make another equally fatuous remark when I suddenly became aware that Tily was approaching me with one of my silver entrée dishes. From a peculiar movement of the forefinger of his left hand, I was sure that he was feeling for the little lion with the upturned tail.

"Ah!" I observed in a casual tone, at the same time fixing him with a stern glance. "You still have them safely, then?"

"What?" asked Celia innocently.

"My silver entrée dishes." At the same moment, I took the precaution to raise my feet high in the air. A second later Austin's toe came into violent contact with the leg of my chair.

"What on earth did you say that for?" he muttered, when Tily was again out of hearing.

"It was only an ordinary remark."

"Under the circumstances, I call it simply brutal."

"But——"

"Sh!"

Very well. I determined to let them keep the conversation going as they could by themselves. Wild horses should not drag another remark from me.

Do you suppose, however, that they would leave me alone? Not a bit of it.

"Have you been to the theatre lately?" asked Celia.

"Not very lately," I said, shutting my mouth with a snap.

"What did you see last?"

"Quite forget."

"I don't think you do, really. Won't you tell me?"

I shook my head. If Austin kicked me again, I was determined to get up and punch his head. A long silence followed, so long that even Tily began to get nervous. Noticing this, my democratic young host endeavored to set the butler at his ease by drawing him into the conversation.

"Are you fond of the theatre, Tily?"

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir."

"What sort of plays do you generally patronize?"

"Well, sir, I like a good drama, now and again."

"We often have dramas down here," said Celia kindly. "Is there one this week, Tily?"

"Yes, madam, I believe there is."

"If you would like to go to it, just let us know, you know."

"Thank you very much, madam."

It was in vain that Austin cleared his throat and tapped his fingers on the table. Celia was engrossed with herself as a Reforming Angel. You will remember, moreover, that she had not been out-of-doors for some little time.

"What is it called, Tily?" she persisted sweetly.

"'The Ticket-of-Leave Man,' madam," said Tily.

III.

CELIA went to bed early.

Austin and I, on the other hand, sat up till well after midnight, discussing the Tily problem, the education of girls, and Austin's excellent taste in pictures and furniture. He had made a very snug den for himself at the top of the house, where the man's den always should be. Tily brought up the whisky and siphon about ten o'clock, and was told that his services would not be required further that evening. Having wished us both a respectful good-night, he withdrew with a rather strange look upon his face—a look that puzzled me.

"Where does he sleep?" I asked.

"On the ground floor. Why?"

"Anybody else sleep on that floor?"

"No."

"He has it all to himself, then?"

"Absolutely."

"Is n't that rather risky?"

"Of course it's risky. That's why we did it. Celia said it would be no test at all to put him upstairs, because it would be so difficult for him to get out without being heard."

"I shall begin to think you're very heavily insured against burglary."

"Is that a joke?"

"Yes."

"Thanks. As a matter of fact, though, we're not insured against burglary at all. I thought of it at once, of course, but Celia would n't hear of it. She said it would not only be taking a very mean advantage of the insurance people—as though any one ever did take advantage of insurance people!—but would also look rather funny if anything happened."

"I'm inclined to agree with her. By the way, I don't wish to make you uneasy, but did you notice Tily's expression to-night?"

"When? At dinner?"

"No. When he went out of the room after bringing up the whisky."

"What was the matter with it?"

"That's just what I can't make out. It was weak and yet determined, excited and yet mournful. I've been wondering ever since what it meant."

"You're getting morbid," said Austin peevishly.

"Not at all. It's your property, not mine."

"You need n't remind me of that."

"My only anxiety is for Celia. In her weak state of health, any sudden alarm or noise might have a permanently injurious effect on her nerves. And then, there's the baby, remember."

"Look here, are you amusing yourself at my expense? Because, if you are, I call it just about as rotten form as any one could imagine."

"My dear Austin, surely you can see that I'm speaking quite seriously. In my opinion, it was a great mistake to engage the man at all at this particular juncture. However, having engaged him, the only thing is to be prepared for an emergency at any moment. Have you made up your mind, for example, what you would do if you caught him in the act of robbing you?"

"Oh, yes, we've discussed all that. My idea was to spring at him, seize him in my arms, hurl him to the floor, jump on top of him, and hold him there with his nose pressed to the boards until somebody fetched a policeman."

"A nice quiet method," I commented.

"Effective, any way."

"What did Celia think of it?"

"Nothing at all. She said that would be brutal, animal, and degrading. You can get a lot of adjectives like that from some society, you know, by just sending a post-card. The proper course to adopt, in her opinion, would be to take him aside and reason with him, gently and lovingly, until he came to a better frame of mind. I pointed out that Tily might not stay to be reasoned with, and then Celia cried, and said I was taking advantage of her weak state of health."

"Your position in the matter is very difficult," I replied. "A middle course, perhaps, would be best. Catch hold of him first and reason with him afterwards."

"Right O!" said Austin, with a tremendous yawn.

IV.

I HAD undressed, and was sleepily cleaning my teeth before rolling into bed when Austin reappeared.

"Hush!" he said, closing the door behind him very softly.

"My dear chap, what's the matter?"

"The rummiest thing you ever heard of. He's got the table laid as if for a banquet!"

"*Banquet? Who has?*"

"Tily. I've been watching him for five minutes. I think he must have gone off his dot. I sneaked down just to see that everything was all right. Blessed if the dining-room was n't ablaze with light! The door was ajar and I peeped in. I tell you the table looks magnificent, and he's walking round and round, touching first one thing and then another, like a miser counting his gold. Come and have a look at 'im!"

"But what's the idea?"

"Lord knows! Quietly, remember!"

As we tiptoed through the hall, I slipped an overcoat over my pajamas—for the night was none too warm—and turned up the collar. Then we crept along to the door of the dining-room.

The scene was exactly as Austin had described it. There was no food on the table, but it was loaded with everything in the way of silver and silver plate that Austin and Celia possessed. My entrée dishes, polished until it almost dazzled you to look at them, stood in a row on the sideboard. On the table itself there were candlesticks, three complete sets of fish knives and forks, salt-cellars galore, dozens of spoons, half-a-dozen egg-boilers, a tantalus, and the other costly articles too numerous to mention. The array was not, perhaps, in the very best of taste, but it was certainly imposing.

And over it all hovered the gloating Tily. The peculiar expression that I had observed earlier in the evening was still there, but intensified. His fingers worked incessantly; I had never before seen anything so passionately interested in other people's goods. He was wearing felt slippers, so that he did not make a sound as he slid over the floor. One realized that he must have given up a very good position in the burgling world.

Quite suddenly an explanation of the whole spectacle occurred to me. Drawing Austin back to the hall, I whispered, doubtless excitedly, "Now's your chance!"

"Chance for what?"

"To settle the matter under dispute. That man is walking in his sleep."

"D'you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. Did n't you notice the glazed expression in his eyes?"

"Yes, I think they were a bit glazed."

"They were very glazed. I'm quite certain he's asleep; there's no other explanation of such strange conduct. Now, they say that, when people are walking in their sleep, they'll answer truthfully

any question that you like to ask them. It's about the only time, I suppose, that you can be quite certain of getting people to speak the truth. I suggest that you confront him straightway, and ask him if he has any intention of stealing your property. Then you'll know."

"And suppose he does n't happen to be asleep?"

"But he is, I tell you!"

"Well, then, since you're so sure, why don't you confront him?"

We stood there for a little, staring at each other very hard. It was a dramatic moment. At last I said, "Are you afraid?"

"No," said Austin; "but my first duty is to my wife and child."

I might have known that he would let me in for it. I shrugged my shoulders and buttoned up my overcoat.

"Very good," I said calmly.

I forgot whether we shook hands. It is quite likely. The most level-headed men become slightly theatrical at such a moment.

I waited until Tily had his back to the door. He paused to stoop over the table and finger something. That was my cue. Crossing the floor as noiselessly as himself, for I had nothing on my feet but socks, I said, "Tily!"

I cannot remember all that happened after this, but I know what came next. He faced round like a flash, and I knew, in that instant that he was no more asleep than I was myself. A moment later I was on my back on the carpet, my arms held down by Tily's knees, and his fingers at my throat. I was exceedingly angry with Austin, as you may imagine.

Then I heard Tily say in a whisper, "You fetch a policeman, sir. I'll see that he don't wake the baby."

"Nonsense!" replied Austin. "Get up at once, Tily! That's my friend you've got there!"

Tily was not convinced. It seemed a long time before the grip on my throat slackened.

"Well, I'm blest!" he said at last. "I'm sure I beg your pardon, sir!"

I got up from the floor. There were no bones broken, but my dignity had suffered a serious shock. The whole affair, indeed, began to appear to me outrageous. When one consents to dine and sleep the night at a friend's house, one scarcely expects his butler to behave in this eccentric and familiar fashion.

"Beg my pardon?" I retorted. "I should hope you do! What d'you mean by it?"

Tily hung his head. "I made sure as you was after the stuff, sir. I did n't recognize you in that get-up. I expect I was a bit startled. I can only hope that you'll overlook it, sir."

"That," I replied stiffly, "is for Mr. Grain to decide."

Tily looked at Austin. "I should like to be allowed to say a word, sir, if you'd be so kind."

"Well?"

"I know I've no right to be burning your lights at this time of night, sir, but I did it all for the best. I wanted to be quite sure, sir, that I was fit to remain in your service. There are two ways of dealing with temptation: one way is to flee from it, the other is to fight and overcome it. I may tell you, sir, and I know you won't take it amiss, that I've had one or two pretty sharp tussles since I took on this job. It was n't hardly fair, sir, if you'll allow me to say so, to put me on the ground floor. I may as well make a clean breast of it. I begun to pack these things into a bag on Tuesday night."

"Oh, you did, did you?"

"Yes, sir, but I won the battle. And this was the last bout—take my word for that, sir. I made it as difficult as I could for meself; you can see that. It was a pretty fair test, sir, but I'd got meself well in hand. If that gentleman had n't acted as he did, I should have been a happy man from this night forward. As it is, I suppose I shall have to go. Well, that's luck, that is!"

"No," said Austin; "you won't go, Tily. If anything could have convinced me of your loyalty and honesty, it would be the fine way you sprang at my friend. You stay with me, Tily."

"I'm sure I'm very, very grateful, sir. You shan't have cause to repent of your kindness. Should I—should I clear away, sir?"

There is a limit to all things—even to the uses of a bachelor. In the morning, I explained this, quite calmly and lucidly, to Celia and Austin. We were in the nursery at the time, whither I had been taken to say good-by to the baby.

"But that's too bad of you!" protested Celia, with her prettiest air. "What in the world shall we do when we quarrel?"

For answer, I led them across to the bassinet and placed them one on either side of it.

"There's your new buffer," I said.

THE POET

BY JOHN KENDRICK BANGS

THE Poet starved, yet, faithful to the end,
His lines held food for brothers in despair;
And in his cheerless attic coign he penned
The words of cheer that killed another's care.

AT THE END OF THE COMMONPLACE

By Judith Chrisney Cameron

IDANA HARTLY let her feet sink comfortably into the soft grass, and then regarded, with an indulgent eye, a grasshopper clinging to the front breadth of her skirt. She observed the insect even while she kept an eye and an ear on the services progressing at the grave.

Idana knew little of the world at large; but she subjected her own small world to a microscopic analysis, which yielded her more acute information regarding her neighbors than those neighbors, fortunately, ever guessed. Idana had an easy-going "man," and she was easy-going herself. She kept her household reasonably well-ordered; her children were obedient; but the outsides of her saucepans were not washed. Some women would have preferred the reverse. However, the docility of her offspring rendered it possible for Idana to leave them in charge of the eldest girl while she herself attended the funeral of Mary Lizella Blocker.

Idana always attended any social occurrence in the neighborhood: for the keenness of her interest in life made almost any gathering worth-while. But on the present occasion she told herself that she had, perhaps, made a mistake to waste any time on the funeral of Lem Blocker's wife; for Lem had never been a good provider for Mary Lizella in her life; nor was he any better at her death. The coffin was painfully plain and meagrely varnished. The village hearse, which was the pride of the whole neighborhood, had not been hired. Mary Lizella had ridden to her grave in the same rusty old spring-wagon which had, on rare occasions, given her a drive while living.

The afternoon was so faultlessly beautiful that quite a crowd of neighbors had been tempted into going to the cemetery; the interment furnishing a definite object for a stroll, and a definite object in certain rural districts is hard to come by, and therefore valuable.

But one and all felt, like Idana, that they were scarcely compensated for their walks or drives, as the case might be. They looked in

vain to Lem Blocker for any sign of emotion. It is true that he twice drew out a faded blue handkerchief, and, for the sake of the unities in propriety, applied it carefully to his left and then to his right eye; but the action deceived no one.

As to Lem Blocker's face, he really could not, apparently, work it into any expressiveness, whether assumed or true. Long years of devotion to his chief god, Money, had reduced his features to a wizened mask, an excellent protection in horse-trading and other deals. Only his eyes, those rebellious organs of the soul, betrayed his real nature; but his eyes he usually kept half-closed.

He stood now listening, with a mild air of resignation, to the minister. It suddenly dawned on Idana that Blocker's suit was quite new. She even fancied she could, on the black cloth, trace the remains of a newly torn-off ticket. Idana, lacking any other amusement, began vaguely speculating why this unemotional mourner should put himself to the expense of a new suit.

She could not refrain from whispering her wonder softly into the ear of a red-cheeked girl of eighteen, Pearl Ferris, who stood close beside her. They were on the outskirts of the little crowd, and Idana dearly loved to confide her speculations to some one. Pearl Ferris concealed a wholesome intelligence under her rather blowsily pretty and bland face. She felt somewhat scandalized that Mrs. Hartly should whisper at a funeral. Pearl herself was giving her most decorous attention to the young minister; so she merely smiled faintly in response to Idana's whisper, and bent her attention on the services. Very shortly some of the neighbors began filling in the grave, and as the crude red mound swiftly arose it seemed to Idana Hartly's imaginative mind fitly to represent its occupant's whole bare life.

"It's a pity," whispered the irrepressible Idana to the uneasy Pearl, "that some of the what-you-call-it, spirit phenomena old Mrs. Gunn's always discussin' could n't be realized here. I'd like to see Mary Lizella rise up and give her matrimonial experiences!"

"Oh, Mis' Hartly!" whispered the scandalized Pearl. "*Don't* talk that way at a funeral, an' *please* don't whisper no more. Folks will look at us, an' I could n't bear that."

"Well, I won't," sibilated Mrs. Hartly, willing, however, to make the most of her last chance to whisper. "I won't say another word. Of course they can't hear us. I always could whisper so not even my lips move. But I don't want to worry you, an' it's idle speculation any way, for Mary Lizella's lips is shut forever."

As she spoke, several of the neighbors, moved by that tender pitifulness that death, far more than life, begets, moved forward and laid flowers on the ugly mound. Lem Blocker wriggled slightly, and then, still with his air of mild resignation to Providence, and with lids half

dropped over his too shrewd eyes, produced a bunch of ill-assorted blossoms and laid them on his wife's resting-place.

As this act was completed, the young minister raised his hand.

"My people," he said, "I must ask your attention a few moments longer, that I may carry out an unusual, yet none the less sacred, wish of our departed sister-in-the-Lord."

At this, a half-drawn breath of surprise and of immediate interest from those assembled made a soft suspiration, like a sigh for the so soon to be forgotten Mary Lizella.

Idana felt a thrill of eager curiosity leap in her veins. Maybe her walk in the hot sun had been well invested, after all. "That I may carry out an unusual, yet none the less sacred, wish of our departed sister-in-the-Lord." What could that wish be? Idana's richly foreseeing mind sped, like a bee among a sudden burst of flowers, from one fascinating guess to another. It was a kind of game she had played with herself for years, this instant foreseeing, or trying to foresee, what others desired; but here, with the speed of light, she rejected a dozen conceptions as vain, and found herself wholly baffled; for it was quite impossible to connect the word "unusual" with anything planned or requested by so very mechanical and commonplace a toiler as Mary Lizella had always been. A vision of the dead in her invariably faded wrappers, moving woodenly from one hourly task to another, rose before Idana. Mary Lizella's very eyes had been faded; the depth of the blue had washed out. Unusual—no! It would be some ordinary fancy, after all, and curiosity would be unrepaired.

Then Idana saw the minister turn and lift from the heart of a shrub a box whose appearance instantly betrayed its contents.

"She's merely asked to have somebody's graphophone sing one of them Italianated hymns over her grave," decided Idana in a flash. "I wouldn't have thought she cared enough for music." As the minister opened the case and fitted on the flower horn, Idana forgot her promise and whispered to Pearl Ferris:

"It's Lawyer Graham's 'phone. He's a cousin of Mary Lizella's. They say it cost two hundred dollars. I wonder what hymn she wanted sung?"

As though in answer to this, and before the indignant Pearl could again secretly protest against Idana's communications, the young minister spoke:

"It is not a wholly unknown thing," he said, "for one of these household companions, a phonograph, to furnish soothing songs at such a time as this. Therefore, although the request of our sister-in-the-Lord, sleeping here in our midst, is unusual, it is not indecorous, and I shall put in the record.

"I say *the* record; because I wish to explain that the record is not

mine. Mrs. Blocker herself, feeling that a chronic disease was loosening her hold on life, brought me the record sealed in a box. She delivered it to me, exacting my promise that I would play it through for her at her funeral, and she asked the patience of her neighbors in listening. As she had no 'phone of her own, she desired me to borrow that of Lawyer Graham."

At the mention of his name, a faint movement touched the corners of Wexley Graham's lips. He was always spoken of as "our rising young lawyer," and, indeed, as he stood among his neighbors, there was already on him an air surprisingly cosmopolitan for so young and so little-travelled a man. From his coolly intellectual face, his penetrating eyes rested a second on the minister; then turned indifferently away.

"I found Mr. Graham already cognizant of her desire," continued the minister, pleased with his own command of words, "and he gladly lent his excellent machine, which by the direction of our sleeping sister I have placed upon her grave."

"I hope to mercy Lawyer Graham didn't choose the soothin' song himself," whispered Idana to Pearl, "because I know that young man. He's a regular infiddle! He calls himself a Darwinite; it's the same thing."

At this juncture Pearl Ferris, resenting Idana's broken promise of decorum, moved softly several yards away, and Idana, because of this, recalled her gage of behavior, and felt that she owed Pearl an apology, later on. Her sense of discomfiture, however, was almost instantly lost in the exquisitely keen interest with which she watched the young minister breaking, with his slender fingers, the paper seal set on the record put in his keeping by Mary Lizella.

Idana yet found time to glance at Lem Blocker. His weather-lined, irregularly-featured face was as inexpressive as ever, his lids still drooped over his fox-like eyes; but Idana, in one comprehensive glance, saw, by the twitching of his knotty hands, that he was by no means pleased with the addition of a phonograph to the services. Idana further remarked that Lawyer Graham seemed to be moved by some kindlier surge of feeling; for the young man had noiselessly drawn closer to the widower, and now stood beside him.

Idana's gaze returned quickly to the minister, who now, amid a silence unbroken except by the cheerful fiddling of sundry grasshoppers in the cemetery grass, put in the record, wound and released the motor-power of the machine.

There was a soft preliminary whir, and then there fell clearly on the ears of those assembled not the familiar "Rock of Ages," not "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," not the "Holy City," those appealing comforters in sorrow; but the unmistakable voice of Mary Lizella

herself; of the woman who had so quietly yielded to the veil of clay and earth heaped upon her.

As the worn and very tired voice began, "I hope you'll all have patience with me for a few minutes. This is my last will an' testament——" Lem Blocker started and turned a ghastly white. He was not alone in his terror. The neighbors, taken completely by surprise, were nearly as shocked as though a ghost had indeed risen from that commonplace grave. The minister himself, having always supposed the record some excellent hymn, was not a little discomfited; but he recovered promptly. After all, if she chose this verbal way of disposing of her few effects, there could be no radical objection.

Lawyer Graham alone had shown no surprise. He merely edged a little closer to Lem Blocker.

The voice from the flower horn went on—"an' bein' no hand with a pen, I chose this way. Somehow, close to you as I am now, it is like speakin' face to face—my sperit to your sperits."

A very genuine shiver ran through the crowd. Lem Blocker's bow-legs trembled under him; his tongue grew dry, and the hair of his flesh stood up. It was all so uncanny to him; so desperately and disagreeably unexpected. As to the neighbors, they remained rooted. If the voice of the too-near dead chilled them, it also fascinated them terribly.

"I have not much to leave," pursued the voice, "an' yet I have a good deal to will. Not in money. When I married Lem I brought him fifteen hundred dollars. He took it an' invested it, because, he said, a woman had n't no sense about money; an' I never saw it again. It drew interest; but Lem spent the interest on improved machinery for the farm."

At this point, her fright having swiftly subsided, Idana shot a glance at the widower engaged in listening to his wife's voice. She saw that the whiteness of terror and the red of new-born anger were struggling on his skin. His face was no longer inexpressive; his lids were rolled up, his eyes dilated; he looked wildly at the pitiless machine.

"I rose at four an' retired at ten every day through our married life," continued Mary Lizella's voice, "an' in them long, long days, hot and cold, I worked like only a woman can work. Sometimes my legs was so tired I had to drag 'em; sometimes my back was breakin'. Lem thought a machine needed oilin' an' repairin' now an' then; but a woman never needs no repairin'. She can just keep on. In between cookin' and washin' an' sewin' an' stock-feedin', I raised some chickens every year, an' every year Lem took 'em an' sold 'em an' put the money on the farm. I never went to church—how could I, havin' no clothes? An' so, havin' no way of makin' money, nor no way of gettin' my own,

I kept a-grievin' (when I found I had that kidney trouble) that I could leave nothin' to my church. So then I remembered Maw's colored cashmere shawl she left me. I took it an' sold it for fifty cents, the only money I've owned myself since I put on Lem's ring; for he made me run store account an' paid it himself. So this fifty cents I solemnly leave an' bequeath to my church; an' neither am I ashamed of the bequest, because it is all I had."

Lem Blocker started forward. Instantly Graham locked arms with him and whispered fiercely in his ear:

"Do you want to commit sacrilege? Let her finish—or *she'll get even some other way!*"

Lem Blocker heard this threat in mortal affright. He staggered, but he stood still. "*Some other way!*" Might there, then, be a way even worse than this?

"I have been a beggar all my married life," continued the Voice, "too poor even to pay back kind words with kind words. I heard a neighbor say of me once, 'There goes Mary Lizella Blocker. Block's a good name for her. She ain't got a bit of feelin'. Say anything nice to her, an' she looks at you like a dummy.'"

Here a woman in the crowd turned scarlet, and covered her face with her hands.

"But I never blamed her a mite," went on the Voice, "I was always too tired, too awful tired, to seem like anything but a dummy. I could n't talk back nice like I would 'a' done sometimes if I could only have been a little rested. But I received every pleasant word ever spoke to me, an' locked it up in my heart, an' oh, I was real grateful! I was! I was!"

A sob rose in the young minister's throat. Unashamed, he dashed the tears from his eyes.

"So," hurried on the Voice, "I leave to every human that ever give me a nice good-mornin' or good-day, or a friendly call, my thanks an' the hope that I shall say good-morning in my home to come, back to them like I'd please to say it. But oh, not yet! I wanter be rested first."

Lem Blocker threw out his unclutched arm passionately.

"Mary—for God's sake, stop!" he shrieked, in mad personal appeal, beyond all reasoning.

"Only one more bequest," went on the voice mechanically. "Now that Lem has flung me acrost the grindstone of life and ground away first my looks, for I was awful pretty for a little while, an' then my strength, an' then my life, I bequeath the said Lem Blocker, him being strong enough an' willin' an' desirous to kill off another woman—an' havin' been covetous of this girl for several years—I bequeath him to Pearl Ferris—an' may God have mercy on her!"

"Will nobody stop that awful thing?" screamed Lem Blocker. "I say—you Lawyer Graham, let me go—or I——"

"The record is now ended of itself, Lemuel," advised the young minister sharply. "Be quiet, please. Remember this is——"

But here Pearl Ferris sprang toward the grave.

"Mis' Blocker," she called wildly, "you've spoke—an' you've got to hear my answer! I never knowed your man thought of me. I would n't have him to save my mortal soul from the bad place!" She turned on Lem Blocker, sobbing wildly. "You brought this on me, you—you—— Oh, won't somebody take me home?"

A sturdy and well-dressed young farmer hurried to her side, reaching her just as Idana did.

"Come in my buggy, Pearl," he said comfortingly. "Ef he ever looks at you agin, I'll kill him!"

"Let us disperse!" cried the minister loudly. He rose manfully to the situation, and shooed his congregation into the road and set them moving. Except Lemuel. To him he said nothing, and presently Idana Hartly, managing to be the last on the grounds, noted that Lemuel Blocker, seeming half-dazed, was left alone near the flower-decked, red mound.

It was Idana whose all-embracing glance noted that although the minister had taken the machine and was driving off with it, he had left the still voiceful Record lying on the grave.

Idana, plodding homeward, a-thrill with a most satisfactory afternoon, could not escape a sense of deprivation in not knowing what would become of that record.

Suddenly Lawyer Graham walked up beside her and fell into step. Idana rejoiced in a human ear, Darwinian or otherwise.

"What on earth will he do with it?" she cried. "It was left lying there. Will he dast to touch it? Will he?"

But Lawyer Graham only smiled inscrutably.

"There's a grasshopper clinging to your skirt," he said.



It is what is left unsaid that keeps peace in the family.

SUDDEN intimacies have changed the map of the world, mortified the flesh, and raised the devil generally.

SOCIAL leeches infest the earth. Yet there was never a barnacle who would not sell his hostess for a bigger mess of pottage.

WHAT under heaven else could a man or woman want save their heart's desire, or tender sympathy when they cannot achieve it?

THE RUDOLPH ENGEL FARM FOUNDATION

By R. T. H.

SO quietly have been conducted the operations of the Rudolph Engel Farm Foundation that the public in general is virtually unaware of its existence. Yet it is one of the greatest benefactions ever conceived.

Rudolph Engel is one of this country's very rich men who have been lucky enough to escape the glare of publicity. Having amassed an immense fortune in mining, real estate, and timber investments when yet but little more than middle-aged, he decided to retire from these fields of operation and devote some of his time and wealth to exploiting a scheme of benevolence which he long had had in mind. There seems to be little doubt that the plan will materially help to solve the problem of how to supply our increasing population with food in years to come.

For some time Mr. Engel's representatives have been buying farm-lands, including many abandoned homesteads in New England and other sections. Four big model farms have been established, one each in Nebraska, Ohio, Tennessee, and Connecticut. These will be followed by others in various States, all of which will be used as schools of instruction. Practical agriculturists, with scientific knowledge of farming in all its branches, are in charge, and under them are the students, both men and women. These come largely from the cities, and from all walks of life—clerks, mechanics, seamstresses, school-teachers, and the like. It is not necessary to have had any experience in farming, and one does not need to be very young, nor to be in excellent physical condition—providing one is not a chronic invalid—in order to secure admission. All are trained at the practice farms, and encouraged to specialize in the branches which appeal to them most strongly, and for which they seem to be best fitted. Care is taken not to work students beyond their strength, yet no shirking is allowed, and strict, though not irksome, discipline is maintained. All are fed and housed at the headquarters, and a small wage is paid, at the discretion of the superintendents.

As soon as a student becomes proficient, he is sent to one of the

company's smaller farms, either as manager or assistant. He is eventually given entire charge of a farm located in a section of the country chosen by him, the place having first been put in good condition, and supplied with the necessary live stock, implements, etc. He is required to make regular reports as to his progress, and at intervals supervisors visit the place for consultation. He may write to the company for advice at any time, and if necessary an expert in his line will be sent to his assistance. Where possible, several farms are located near one another, so that the latest improved machinery—too costly for a small farm—may be used for all of them.

After the manager of a farm proves his ability, he is permitted to buy the place from the company on the instalment plan, out of his share of the crops, or for cash if he can command it. The company, however, retains the title until all indebtedness is wiped out. The newly-made farmers are encouraged and helped in every way to make good, and only laziness or rascality need ever cause failure and dismissal. If a farmer wishes to enlarge his holdings, he is helped to do so, if practicable.

Judicious buying of lands, and of stock, seeds, implements, etc., has made this scheme, formed as a means of philanthropy, pay a handsome profit, not only from the sale of produce, but from the increased value of the holdings. The income is used to enlarge the field of operations. The company expects soon to be in a position to raise most of its own live stock, seed, etc., and may eventually manufacture its own implements and machinery. The plan does not conflict with the agricultural colleges, but rather supplements them. Students leaving such colleges may go to these farms for a short period to acquire actual experience, and are helped to get located in the same way as are the other students.

And now it is time to acknowledge that the foregoing is purely imaginary, without any foundation in fact. It is put forward as a suggestion to the holders of great wealth, who wish to help their fellow men. In this way they can benefit the country at large, and aid many worthy men and women to health and prosperity.



MENALCAS IN MARYLAND

By Helen Coale Crew

THE afternoon sun sparkled upon the blue Chesapeake, and the woolly flock nibbled the grass upon the water's edge. Such tender grass, starred everywhere with daisies and empurpled with clover-heads. The sheep buried their black noses in the cool green blades, and tore off tiny mouthfuls with sharp, jerking bites. Upon the western horizon rose the soft sweep of Maryland's blue hills. Beyond the hedge that bound the meadow a path ran, skirting the margin of a pine glade and dipping out of sight beyond a whitewashed cabin where hollyhocks stood arow, already budding.

The shepherd stood beneath a locust tree whose honeyed blossoms, beyond their prime, dropped about his feet. He looked off to where radiant white clouds leaned low upon the water's distant edge, like bellying sails. He shook his head, gave a great sigh, and stuffed a book into his pocket.

"I'll never in the world get my B.A., that's certain," he said aloud. "Old Silverlink's course is too stiff. Hello, who comes here?"

Two figures were approaching slowly along the path, one a young girl, the other a big colored woman, clad in a stiff black calico which she held carefully up out of the dust with one hand, while with the other she balanced a huge umbrella over her companion. The girl's white dress swished softly about her feet as she moved through the grass by the side of the path. With a pink sunbonnet, swung by its strings, she brushed the great white daisies that nodded along the way.

"Now, Honey," remonstrated the woman, "why for ain't you sensible and keep dat bonnet on yo' haid where it b'longs? You want to git brack as a nigger in this yer broilin' sun? Is that the way you done behave up at dat No'thern school where you bin? I wish I had n't a-brung you-all along, nohow. Yo' Pa'll give us bofe conniption fits if I lets you get all burnt up."

The girl laughed out blithely, after the manner of all young things in June.

"Oh, no, Mammy, nobody ever gives me conniption fits. I'm

going to do just as I like all summer. Guess I'll begin now." She raised her arm and tossed the offending bonnet over the hedge.

"There!" she said. Then she saw the shepherd.

The shepherd strode forward, lifted the bonnet upon his stick, and hung it upon a branch of the locust tree.

The girl looked over the hedge.

"Shepherd, why do you do that?" she asked.

"Honey," whispered the woman, "you-all must n't be talkin' to a stranger man." Then, in a loud voice, "I'll thank you, suh, to return this lady's bonnet."

"Are you a real shepherd?" queried the girl.

"I am," replied the youth promptly.

"Where did you come from?"

The shepherd's brown eyes sparkled. "From Sicilian shores. I was there 'when Dalphnis pined away,' you know."

The girl's gray eyes flashed. "Ah, of course! Bring out your pipe, then, and sing me a pastoral strain."

"Now, Honey, now, Honey," urged the woman, pulling the girl along by the arm; but the latter turned her head over her shoulder smilingly.

"Shall I sing you a pastoral strain to-morrow?" suggested the shepherd.

"Yes, I will come and fetch my bonnet—to-morrow," said the girl.

The shepherd watched them until they disappeared beyond a clump of willows where the path bent to follow the shore. Then he drew his book from his pocket and flung himself down at full length upon the grass. The sheep nibbled about him quietly. He could hear them breathe softly in little puffs. The pink sunbonnet dangled above his eyes. He opened his book.

"Theocritus, you have suddenly become interesting," he said. "I may disappoint Old Silverlink yet."

Next morning, early, the shepherd drove his flock to the accustomed place, and until the noon hour he kept his attention for the most part fixed upon his book, though the pink bonnet flapped in the light breeze, and its strings waved gently to and fro. The day was such as only June brings, and the sheep needed but little shepherding. When the waving strings caught his eye he invariably remarked, "She's a darling!" Then, glancing at his book again, he would add, "And I'm a duffer. I ought to be kicked!"

At noon he and his flock disappeared, but by two o'clock they were back again, the shepherd looking suspiciously fresh and decidedly attractive in his white flannels and jaunty blue tie. Between two and

four he turned his page but twice, and every slightest sound caught his immediate attention. Then she came. He rose to meet her at the first flash of her white dress by the willows. She was bareheaded, and her hair blew softly about her face. In one hand she carried a tall staff, and she led before her two little black goats with wreaths of crimson about their necks. Their tiny polished hoofs made a sharp staccato upon the path.

The boy—for the shepherd was scarcely more than that—made a space in the hedge, pushing aside the bushes.

"Come into Arcady, fair Shepherdess," he begged, "and I'll pull down the branch while you gather your bonnet."

"Is Arcady a safe place?" she asked. But even as she spoke she tethered the goats to the hedge.

"Safe? Why, yes; I'm here," he replied simply, and helped her through.

"I gave Mammy the slip," she said, smiling reminiscently. "She does not know I am holding converse with a 'stranger man.'"

"Stranger!" echoed the boy. "Why, I knew you twice ten centuries ago! Are you not the fair Amaryllis?"

"Surely. And you?"

"I am all the passionate shepherds—Daphnis, Menalcas, Corydon—rolled into one."

Gaily they seated themselves under the locust tree. The Chesapeake laughed in the sunshine; little breezes shivered through the grass; and the sheep raised their heads for a brief moment, their noses all aquiver, then serenely bent again to earth.

"How many sheep have you, Shepherd?"

"Twenty-four, and, as you see, not a black sheep among them."

"And have they names?"

"Yes; that is Alpha by the water's edge; Beta you see in that clump of daisies; there go Gamma and Delta to investigate your goats; and so on down to Omega here, who has but one eye, poor lamb!"

"Shepherd, methinks you must be a scholar," said the girl, clasping her hands about her knee.

"Shepherdess, I have spent three years in the halls of learning up at Baltimore, and am like to spend another there if Old Silverlink does n't flunk me."

The girl sat up suddenly.

"Old Silverlink?"

"Yes, the old chap that knows more Greek than any one else on the continent; or on the globe, for all I know. He is a saturated solution of it. It fairly oozes from his pores. He may block my path yet."

The boy frowned. The girl leaned carefully back against the tree.

"Why should he block your way?" she questioned.

"Says I'm loafing"—briefly.

The girl put her chin on her hand. Her eyes looked out over the smiling water to its far horizon.

"Shepherd, why do you keep these sheep?"

"My father thinks I'm loafing, too"—angrily.

Her eyes slowly came about and met his.

"Shepherd, *are* you loafing?"

The boy leaped to his feet, drew his book from his pocket, and tossed it upon the grass before her.

"Not a bit of it!" he exclaimed. "Not since yesterday! And I say, Shepherdess, if you'll just browse those little black goats of yours here with my sheep every day, I'll have old Theocritus down fine inside of two weeks. He's the fellow I flunked on. Please, now, will you do it? Then come up to Baltimore when I graduate, and you shall have a front seat and the finest bouquet——"

Up over the hedge, as round as the full moon, rose the wrathful face of Mammy.

"Miss Clytie," she called, "is you done forgot yo'sef and yo' manners, a-talkin' with a stranger this-a-way, and yo' Pa askin' and askin' where is you! Come home this minute, now, please, ma'am, whilst I send this young man a-scootin', him and his sheepses!"

The girl rose with a mock sigh. "Mammy has to be minded," she said. "She has n't discovered yet that I have grown up."

Running lightly to the hedge, she crept through and smiled back at the boy on the other side.

"To-morrow, Shepherd, I will come for my bonnet and hear the pastoral strain." Stooping, she unfastened the goats.

"Come, Apollo! Come, Aphrodite!"

Once more Mammy poised her huge umbrella over the girl's head, and they disappeared up the path, a cloud of dust enveloping the little goats, dragging reluctantly behind.

The boy leaned over the hedge.

"No shepherdess, but Circe herself," he murmured.

When Mammy and her young mistress reached the white-pillared house beyond the pine grove, the girl found her father on the shady corner of the veranda, absorbed in a book, a fragrant julep at his elbow. She crept up quietly behind him and clasped her two hands lightly over his eyes.

"Clytie, by all the gods!" he said, and would have drawn away her hands, but that she kept them firmly, if lightly, in place.

"Father, do you believe in love at first sight?" she questioned.

"Yes," he replied promptly; "ever since I first met your mother."

"Father, there's a boy minding your prize sheep down in the east meadow."

"Yes, he turned up the other day, and Metzger hired him for the summer season. A green hand, I'm told."

"He has a volume of Theocritus in his pocket."

"The deuce he has! Let go my eyes, Honey."

"Just a minute, Father. He says 'Old Silverlink' won't let him take his degree."

"The deuce he does!"

"Oh, wait, Father! He's such a nice boy, so straight and clean and good to look at. I—I rather like him."

"Hold on, Clytie, hold on!"

"I could fall in love with him, I think, Father."

"Ye gods, such a brazen girl!"

Not so brazen, either, if crimson cheeks and downcast eyes are akin to shame.

"I thought I'd better tell you."

He loosened her hands and drew her down upon his knee.

"Poor little motherless girl," he said softly.

"Poor old Dad," she said mockingly. "But tell me, Father, who is this shepherd boy?"

"It's young Hamilton," he replied. "He's all right, Honey, though a little hazy on aorists. He's no notion the sheep are mine. But how came you to be hobnobbing with a shepherd boy down there in the east meadow, tell me that! Why does n't Mammy look after you better?"

"Oh, she does. Mammy's a jewel. I just looked over the hedge one day. But now I must dress for dinner." She rose and turned away.

"Here, Clytie, wait a moment. Has this young chap fallen in love with you, too?" He gazed quizzically at the charming face.

"Well"—dubiously—"perhaps not yet; but"—brightening—"he will before the week's out!" She disappeared within the wide doorway, and her father groaned.

"Oh, these girls! Here, Clytie, Clytie, come back! Where's the girl? Clytie!"

The girl appeared again in the doorway.

"Bring this shepherd boy here and let me have a look at him. If he's his father's son, he ought to bear close inspection."

"Oh, Father, he bears it beautifully! I inspected him closely myself this afternoon!"

"Shades of Tartarus!" he groaned; but she was gone.

Next day it rained, and the shepherd was woefully disconsolate. But he made great progress with his book, sitting on the tiny porch of the little whitewashed cabin, while his sheep huddled together under the pines. Then a fair day, but still no shepherdess. The shepherd was distracted, and in all of eight hours had read but one Idyll and two Epigrams. But on the morrow of that she came; not by the path, but down through the pine trees, and so softly that he did not hear, but remained absorbed in his book. She leaned quietly over the hedge and watched him gravely. When he suddenly raised his head and saw her, his joy was so complete that she shrank back a little from it.

"Ah, Shepherdess, I was just reading about you!" he exclaimed.

"About me?"

"Yes, listen.

"Hast thou come, dear friend, after three nights and mornings? Hast thou come? Alas, those who long grow old in a day! As much as spring is sweeter than winter, as much as a sheep is more woolly than its lamb, as much as the voice of the nightingale is more melodious than the voices of all other birds, by so much does thy coming rejoice me, and I hasten to thee as a traveller seeks the shadows of the beech trees when the sun glows too warmly——"

Here she broke in:

"Something sweet is thy mouth and lovely thy voice, O shepherd! 'T is better to hear thee sing than to sip honey.

"But what have I to do with you, Shepherd of the woolly sheep?"

He laughed out so joyfully that every sheep raised an inquiring nose.

"Is a shepherd nothing? The god Bacchus drove cattle once, you know. And there was Endymion, a mere herdsman, but Diana herself stooped to kiss him."

He made an opening in the hedge.

"You must come in and get your sunbonnet, you know."

"Shepherd, I fear me it is n't safe in Arcady."

"It is n't, but oh, come in!"

She stepped through the gap, and the bushes swung back into place behind her. And Apollo and Aphrodite, not being tethered, trotted away down the path, their silky flanks gleaming in the sunlight.

The sun propped his head upon a blue hill, waiting. When at last two figures came through the hedge and turned up the path, he slipped below the horizon.

"Clytie, what sort of a man is your father?"

"An old darling, of course."

"Of course. But what will he think of a poor shepherd?"—
anxiously.

"He will have but a poor opinion of one"—saucily.

"And I'm such a duffer, you know. Fooled away all my junior year and did n't pass my Greek Exams. Heavens, what a dressing down Old Silverlink did give me! But I tell you, Sweetheart, I'll work like a Trojan next year, you'll see! I've something to work for now."

As they approached the house, the tall figure lounging in an easy chair on the veranda rose and came to meet them.

"Shepherd," said the girl, her face aglow with love and agleam with laughter, "my father, Professor Silverlink."

The Professor smiled and stretched out a welcoming hand.

"Mr. Hamilton!" he said.

The boy blushed to the roots of his hair. Routed by surprise and confusion, he yielded to the force of habit.

"Present!" he replied.

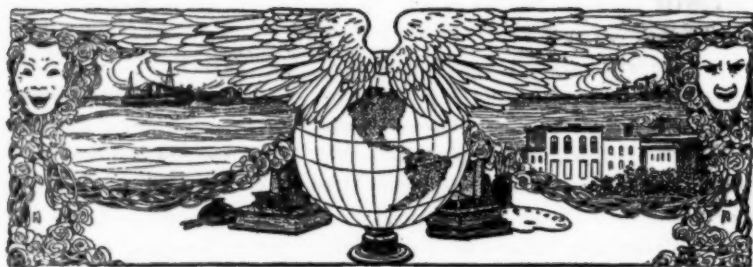
DREAMS IN THE NIGHT

BY MARY GERMAINE

DREAMS in the night in the winter chill
Of the old, ghost-haunted room,
With the tap of the larch on the window-sill
And a thread of light in the gloom
From the same cold star that once beguiled
The watchful eyes of a frightened child.

Dreams, sad, sad dreams, of the tearful day,
Handling the old familiar things,
Sighing, and packing them all away;
While each wan moment its memory brings,
And the same bleak wind comes back to blow
His cheerless whistle across the snow.

Dreams, haunting dreams, that ghostlike call
When the first, red morning glow
Glints tassels of larch on my chamber wall,
And, waking, I bid them go.
But gray they huddle 'twixt me and the sun,
For these haunting dreams and my heart are one.



WAYS OF THE HOUR

A DEPARTMENT OF CURRENT COMMENT AND
CRITICISM—SANE, STIMULATING, OPTIMISTIC

THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT

IN these columns, some months ago, the writer called attention to a grave danger in the constitutional method of appointing justices to the Supreme Court of the United States. It is the highest, the most powerful tribunal in the world, setting aside acts of Congress, acts of Presidents, acts of State legislatures; a law unto itself and responsible to no one. It is beyond any power to revise, reverse—or almost even to question—a single opinion. It is beyond any power to remove a single member, except through the practically impossible course of impeachment. The appointment lies wholly with the President—to be confirmed by the Senate—when the appointee becomes established for life, beyond the reach of any authority, accountable to no one, his personal opinion made the final criterion for any question which can possibly come up.

During one year and a half of his administration, President Taft has already been called upon to appoint four out of the nine justices, and there is hardly the possibility that he will not have to appoint one or two more before he retires.

Think of it—one man appointing a majority of the members of the Supreme Bench! It is quite true that President Taft is probably as good a judge of the requirements as any man who ever occupied his high position; but it is none the less a serious condition because it might be much worse. The Supreme Court, rebuilt with younger men, during this administration, will control the legislation of this great

country and dictate upon all its most important questions for many years to come—and the majority of that court will be men in principle, convictions, and policies according with what one man thinks they should be. In other words, not for four years or for eight, simply as the people's choice for chief Executive, with the limited power of suggestion and veto over legislation, but for five-and-twenty years and more, with the unlimited power of the Supreme Court, Judge Taft's hand will hold the legislation of the Nation. In appointing two justices to the Supreme Bench, President Grant had an opportunity to reverse a previous finding of the same court and save the country from grave disaster. He did it, and we all rejoiced. But however good the intention, however wise the man, however honest his effort to appoint upon the broadest grounds of patriotism, it is a condition which should not be.

The high courts must, of course, be invulnerable. They must be beyond the reach of partisan prejudice and political chicanery; but the judges should be appointed by the people, and there should rest forever, with the whole people, the supreme right of recall. It will, of course, require a constitutional amendment to accomplish it, and constitutional amendments are difficult propositions; but when the people of the land realize the necessity and the dangerous autocracy established by the present system, the amendment will not be long in materializing. At this moment the Supreme Court is itself hastening this realization. Its tremendous importance to-day is its plenary power over legislation, which it really holds only by sufferance or by its own unchallenged assumption. Without constitutional justification, the Court passes upon all laws on the ground of their general expediency, to-day, which is essentially a legislative task. In fact, more and more it is becoming the Supreme Court, and not Congress, which really makes the laws, and which really governs this country.

Some day the public will apprehend its helplessness under present conditions, and will resent the dictation of the omnipotent master over which it has no control, but whose salary it pays as the salary of a servant; which the Supreme Bench should be, as much as the President or the street-sweeper.

WILLARD FRENCH

A SIMPLE METHOD OF PAYING ONE'S DEBTS

WHEN, through services accepted, one feels the burden of obligation becoming intolerably irksome, the best course to follow is to put the benefactor in the wrong by boldly accusing him of some offense and roundly upbraiding him. Whether the offense is real or imaginary, matters little; for the chances are, the

accused person will be so taken aback that he will have no breath left for reply before the other party has marched off the field with colors flying and band playing.

On the other hand, should there arise just cause of complaint against you for some injury or discourtesy or rank ingratitude, never wait for the aggrieved person to come to you with protest or remonstrance, however mild; but go you to him instead and cunningly seek to betray him into an impatient or uncivil utterance and then taunt him with his brutality and bring up against him a long list of grievances which the heat of the moment will readily suggest to you. Give him clearly to understand that his conduct is insufferable, and that if he wishes to retain your friendship he must mend his manners.

If you happen to be a young lady with a fondness for flirtation, whenever you find your treatment of some deserving youth to have been unusually outrageous—whenever, in short, you have made some honest and affectionate heart bleed from the atrocious cruelty of alternate soft enticement and harsh rebuff—give the gasping victim no opportunity to voice a humble protest or a gentle reproach, but, by some of the arts of which you are so accomplished a mistress, proceed to fret him into an involuntary gesture or cry of resentment, or wring from his tortured soul a word or tone not exactly amiable, and then annihilate him with your just indignation and righteous scorn for one who can so far forget himself in a lady's presence. The chances are (if he is a true gentleman) that he will take his medicine and give you no further trouble.

PERCY F. BICKNELL

WHY MORAL PLAYS APPEAL

THE theatre-going public may be safely left to itself in the matter of deciding the sort of play which shall survive for their entertainment. When all has been said, the salacious production more often than not is sent to the storehouse, while the producer recoups himself from his losses through some clean play which has stood the test year after year.

Evidence is at hand in plenty to show that disaster has been encountered by every manager who has catered to an alleged taste for highly colored stage presentations, while the biggest box-office records have been achieved by such plays as "The Man from Home," "The Old Homestead," "Way Down East," and "The Christian."

Two theatres in New York City were compelled to close prematurely last season, because, having gained a temporary vogue with "girl" plays, they could find no responsive public for any kind of offering. They had established a reputation for salacious works, and their patrons

turned elsewhere for their theatrical bill of fare rather than avail themselves of the atmosphere of which they had been surfeited.

New York has fifty theatres of the first class; yet the two greatest successes artistically and financially are plays absolutely pure in scope and rendition. These are "The Concert," at the Belasco; and "Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm," also at a Belasco theatre; while but a few doors west "The Country Boy," a comedy as wholesome as it is amusing, has drawn out the "Standing Room Only" sign from the cellar of the Liberty Theatre for the first time in years.

No better illustration of the trend theatrically can be given than a review of the career of Al H. Woods. Last year he produced only plays which appealed to the tenderloin element. He found the patronage uncertain even for the most successful of the lot ("The Girl from Rector's"). This season Mr. Woods is making a fortune with a third interest in a clean musical comedy ("Madame Sherry"), while "The Girl in the Taxi" has broken box-office records, in several instances. The latter is a straight comedy without music, and is now drawing the best people to the Astor Theatre.

Mr. Woods, however, has two other productions in the city: one, "New York," goes to the storehouse at the end of the week in which these lines are written, because the public would not respond to its vulgarity; but—and here we have the best evidence of all—Mr. Woods has just opened the Garden Theatre, a house that has been closed for a year, and was supposed to be out of the beaten track, with a beautiful play with a good moral undertone, entitled "The Rosary," and, to the amazement of his colleagues, is actually making a profit, with an extreme likelihood that this play will bring the Garden Theatre out of its long-time slumber.

ROBERT GRAU

GOALS

IN the current number of one of the magazines, a young girl seeks employment as a model. Thinking that the elevator in a certain large building is not to be used by those in search of work, she walks up to the twelfth floor, intending, if refused, to knock at the different studios on her way down. When asked why she had not tried the lowest floor first, she replies that after being discouraged by probable and repeated refusals her legs could carry her down; but they might refuse to carry her up.

Since each individual possesses but a limited amount of strength, it must be well to gauge it wisely in planning the personal campaign, so as to use what we have in direct pursuit of the goal we most desire to reach. If it be true that "no man can ever rise above that at

which he aims," there is no satisfaction to be gained in fastening the gaze upon any rung of the ladder other than the topmost round.

We may be forced by circumstance to accept a lower point of vantage; but had we aimed at the lower, we should have been relegated by similar circumstances to one still further down in the scale.

Every man and woman enjoys some rare moments of being, if only in imagination, what he or she longs to be. So that if one aims at the highest and never attains—still something of the spell of the summit descends upon him, becomes a part of his atmosphere. Such a one, even if compelled to walk with his feet in the mire, yet moves with his head among the clouds. He has for compensation what circumstance can neither give nor take away—himself.

He is never anxious to get away from himself. He exists beyond the clogging circumstance. The onslaught of chance cannot pierce his armor; and at any moment, should the pressure be removed, his personality has power to spring into full and immediate enjoyment of that attainment upon which his thoughts have been centred.

Thoughts being forerunners on the path our feet intend to follow—given time enough—unflagging pursuit can arrive at any goal. Achievement is the law of unceasing effort. The purpose and the zeal are within our grasp. Time alone is arbitrary and outside our control. But who would not choose to be cut off on the way to his individual goal, even if unachieved, rather than to arrive in the fullness of time at an undesired fruition?

JANE BELFIELD

SUPREME

BY ARTHUR WALLACE PEACH

I N the still white hours of the night
 You seem so near—
 The rapture of your eyes I know,
 Your voice I hear
 Speak in the low, loved, tender way
 With meaning clear.

The great wide world fades far and faint,
 And leaves but you
 With all the old dear vanished dreams
 That once we knew.
 Ah, then, I know that Love can break
 Death's portals through!



DRESSING A SMALL BOY

It was necessary for the small boy to be dressed. His mother was temporarily engaged with company, and the father, brave and undaunted, offered himself as a sacrifice. He never had done such a thing before, but he thought he knew how.

"I will dress you, Willie," he said with a sweet smile. "Have no fear. Papa is on the job."

He picked up a garment with two large holes in the middle and white buttons placed at irregular intervals around the heavens, like a star map.

"This goes on first," he said with a lofty air of confidence.

"No, it does n't," said Willie. Even he knew better than that.

"Ah, yes," observed papa, picking up another garment that he immediately recognized as a shirt. "Slip this on, Willie. And these," he continued, "are your drawers. Let's see. Here, put your feet in these holes."

Willie did, and papa started to button the first piece, which seemed to be a sort of corset, to the lower garment.

"Curses on the luck!" he exclaimed, as he discovered that it was wrong side on. "Why did n't you tell me, Willie?"

"I never know, myself, papa; honest I don't," said Willie.

Willie's papa held up a new garment that he had just discovered.

"What's this?"

"That's my shield. And, oh, papa, where are my stockings?"

"Why not slip them on last?"

Papa picked up the garments in question and discovered that there were long garters attached to them, that apparently wound around Willie's neck and were then guyed to some of the buttons on the side. There was no trouble about buttons. They were everywhere.

Walnuts and Wine

"Take off all your clothes!" he roared. "Don't you see that these garters must go first? You're a nice specimen of a boy!"

He snatched off the clothes. Then he got the pieces together like a picture puzzle.

"Be calm," he muttered to himself, "and all will yet be well."

Willie shivered.

"Put this shirt on," said papa sternly.

It was done.

"Now this waist-band."

It was done.

"Now this waist, these drawers. Wait until I button on these garters. Here we are, little man, almost ready."

Papa was beginning to smile with joy.

"Takes us to get dressed, eh? Now your waist. Yes, here is the bottom. This goes over this. No, this goes over this. No—hang it!—this goes under this. Never mind. Mamma will never know. Now for his little trousers. Ha! We are getting there."

At this moment mamma appeared.

"Oh, John dear!"

Papa turns to her with a smile of triumph.

"Well, well, is n't this all right? Look! I have actually dressed him!"

"Oh, John dear!"

"What is it, what is it?"

"Don't you see that you have left off his health band?"

Thomas L. Masson

THEIR WAY

By H. E. Zimmerman

A pair of shoes may hurt like sin

For weeks, and then about

The time we get them broken in,

They start to breaking out.

CAN'T BE BEAT

"Oh, yes, we have a wonderful climate," said the man from southern Texas. "Why, only last season we raised a pumpkin so large that, after sawing it in two, my wife used the halves as cradles in which to rock the babies."

"Yes," replied the man from New York: "but in my State it's a common thing to find three full-grown policemen asleep on one beat."

Walnuts and Wine

PIE IN ART

An artist in Chicago tells of a lady in that town, who, with her maid, went to purchase a still-life picture for her dining-room.

She selected a canvas on which were painted a bunch of flowers, a pie cut in two, and a roll, and was about to pay twenty-five dollars for it when her maid approached to whisper in her ear.

"Excuse me, ma'am," said the servant, "but you are making a bad bargain. I saw a picture very much like this sold the other day for fifteen dollars."

"And was it as good as this?"

"Better, ma'am. There was a good deal more pie in it."

Howard Morse



AS TO CONTROL

"We are all of us under some kind of control. One man is controlled by Cæsar, another by Bonaparte, another by Plato, and so on."—*Eminent Psychologist.*

By Blakeney Gray

We've all of us got a control of some kind,
Like Cæsar, or Jonah, or Brutus,
That acts like a germ in the depths of the mind
And guides us through pathways that suit us.
Some people are managed by Adam, and then
Some others are guided by Solly,
As some have referred to the Wisest of Men,
But I'm in the clutches of Polly.

When Bonaparte rules in the soul of a man
That man becomes shortly a hero,
Or if he does things that are under a ban
'T is likely he's managed by Nero.
Some Cooks are beneath the fair Borgia's control,
And add to the world's melancholy,
But I from the top of my head to my sole
Am run by the power of Polly.

In statecraft we find quite a number of men
Who've yielded to Machiavelli,
And often we find in some poet's quill pen
Some traces of Byron and Shelley.

Walnuts and Wine

Sapphira's the guide with full many a wight
Who gives herself over to folly,
But I, I admit, both by day and by night
Am managed completely by Polly.

Some persons delight in the dark Roman hand
That's known as the hand of old Cato.
Some lovers whose methods I can't understand
Rejoice in the ruling of Plato.
Some women I've met with are deep in the clutch
Of Xanthippe's pepperish trolley,
But I am controlled by the gossamer touch
That comes from the finger of Polly.

Let others have Cæsar with brain all astir,
Bill Shakespeare, Sam Johnson, or Raleigh.
Let others choose Cassius, or, if they prefer,
Munchausen or T. B. Macaulay.
I don't give a rap who runs others as long
As I've for my Tyrant, by Golly,
The Muse who fills up all my hours with song,
My fairylike, airylike Polly!



ABSURD

Among the recent visitors to a metropolitan museum was a woman from a rural district, who was much interested in the ancient pottery exhibits.

The attendant pointed out one collection of beautiful old vases, saying:

"Those were dug up at Herculaneum."

"What!" exclaimed the woman from the country. "Dug up?"

"Yes, madam."

"Out of the ground?"

"Just as they are now. They were cleaned up a bit, but they were found about as you see them."

With an expressive toss of the head, the lady from the country turned to her companion and said:

"He's a nice-looking young feller, but I don't believe what he says. They never dug up no ready-made pots out of the ground."

Elgin Burroughs

Walnuts and Wine

ROSTAND AND THE LAW

An American friend of Edmond Rostand says that the great dramatist once told him of a curious encounter he had had with a local magistrate in a town not far from his own.

It appears that Rostand had been asked to register the birth of a friend's newly arrived son. The clerk at the registry office was an officious little chap, bent on carrying out the letter of the law. The following dialogue ensued:

"Your name, sir?"

"Edmond Rostand."

"Vocation?"

"Man of letters, and member of the French Academy."

"Very well, sir. You must sign your name. Can you write? If not, you may make a cross."

Howard Morse

EUPHONIOUS ARTHUR

By Margaret G. Hays

When Arther had the whooping-cough,
We thought it quite a joke
In the veg-e-ta-ble garden
To watch the Arti-choke.

GOOD BY INJUNCTION

A big negress came before a Virginia judge the other day, seeking redress for domestic troubles.

"I's a wronged woman," she declared in a give-me-back-my-child-you-villain tone, "an' I wants redress fru' dis yere co't."

"Tell me about your trouble," said the kind-hearted judge.

"It's about mah ole man. He's done been ca'yin' on plumb scannalous wif a lot of deese yeh young niggah gals, an' it's got so ba'ad twill I don' see him no moah'n once a week. Sompin's gottah be did!"

"H'm! I see," said the judge. "You are seeking a divorce—a legal separation—is that it?"

"Go 'long, man! Divo'ce nothin'! Think I's gwine t' gib him what he wants, and 'low dat man who, 'spite all his cussedness, is de han'somest niggah in Coon Tree Holler, t' go skyhootin' 'roun' 'mong dem little yaller gals? N', sah! I doan' want no divo'ce, n'r dat legal septititution you-all's talkin' about. N', sah, jedge; what I wants is an injunction."

R. M. Winans

Walnuts and Wine

A MONUMENT FUND

The meanest man in town having died and been duly buried, a bunch of his late acquaintances and neighbors were discussing the kind of party he was.

"We ought to raise a fund to build him a monument," one man suggested.

"Rats!" chorused the crowd in protest. "Who'd give anything to build him a monument?"

"Everybody would," insisted the first speaker. "We'd raise it by unpopular subscription."

W. J. Lampton

MERELY A MATTER OF INTERPRETATION

A prominent minister, wishing to get the opinion of the men of his congregation on some important questions, sent them a list for their answers. Among the questions was, "Why are men less interested in religion than women?" One facetious fellow replied:

Although the great Sabatier would say, "Man is incurably religious," I think I have seen some men permanently cured of the malady. But his interest in women is deeper than that, and no antitoxin has as yet been discovered. So I would say, Doctor, if asked for an opinion right off the bat, that men are less interested in religion than in women because, while their interest in the former may be called an acquired characteristic, their interest in the latter is innate and inherited. Hoping this may be of some service.

P. R. H.

HOW HE WAS RECEIVED

By Edmund Moberly

She sat on the steps at a party
Enwrapped in an absent air.
Came her lover with greetings hearty;
She gave him a vacant stair.

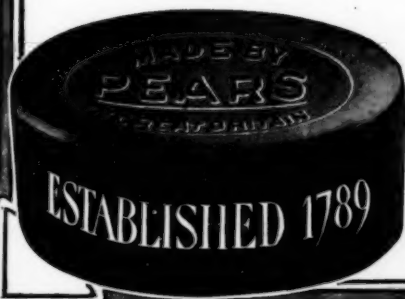
PERTINENT OR IMPERTINENT?

Mr. Clemens is an old gentleman who need take no thought to add a cubit to his length, Providence having given him six feet seven inches of that commodity, but thoughtlessly omitted the width. One morning, quite early, domestic problems compelled him to milk the family cow; he sat down beside her rather gracefully, he thought, until the colored cook, coming through the yard, exclaimed, "Law, Mr. Clemens, what is you doin' out here settin' down on dat pile er legs!"

J. T.



Woman's Natural Charm



Naturalness

—*that* should be every woman's aim. The further she gets away from that standard, the less attractive she becomes. It is the true test of manners, apparel, and personal charm. Indeed, it is the very key-note of beauty. Naturalness of skin and complexion is therefore beauty's most essential element. This being so,

Pears' Soap

which is entirely composed of natural cleansing, beautifying ingredients, forms the best promoter and preservative of skin-beauty that money can buy or science produce. PEARS has been woman's natural beauty soap for 120 years.

PEARS makes the skin as fine as silk and as soft as velvet and is

Matchless for the Complexion

OF ALL SCENTED SOAPS PEARS' OTTO OF ROSE IS THE BEST.

"All rights secured."

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

Walnuts and Wine

THE LOST IMPRESSION

By Edmund Moberly

Seated one day at the easel,
I was weary of light and shade,
And my brushes wandered idly
Over the daub I'd made.

I gave no heed to the drawing,
No thought to the coloring,
But I soon achieved a picture
That was surely a wondrous thing.

A pink cascade in the foreground
Was bathed in a green sun's glow
On a lofty peak in the distance
There was polychromatic snow.

Away in the middle distance,
In the shade of a turquoise pine
That stood in a sapphire meadow,
Were numerous Scotch-plaid kine.

When finished it caused a furor,
At exhibits a hit it made.
'T was bought by a Pittsburg steel king,
And dear was the price he paid.

Since then I have striven vainly
Its beauties to duplicate,
But I fear that it's beyond me
To turn out that picture's mate.

I may catch my lost impression
In the future some time, somewhere,
But will I catch together
Both impression and millionaire?



AN EXTRAVAGANT GIRL!

It is reported that an American heiress spent twenty-five thousand dollars for a lace handkerchief in Paris. Seems like a lot of money to blow in.

J. W. Babcock

Madam—

No matter what you have decided to serve for luncheon or dinner, do not fail to add Nabisco Sugar Wafers for dessert.

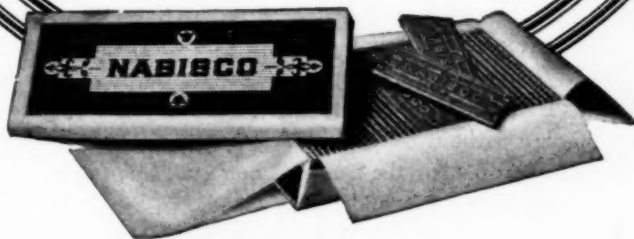
These dessert confections are so tempting and inviting that they not only make a good meal better, but oftentimes save a poor one.

Always fresh and delightful in flavor.

In ten-cent tins

Also in twenty-five cent tins

CHOCOLATE TOKENS—similar to NABISCO, but with a delicious outer shell of rich chocolate.



NATIONAL BISCUIT COMPANY

Walnuts and Wine

Too Busy

An Episcopal missionary in Wyoming visited one of the outlying districts in his territory for the purpose of conducting prayer in the home of a large family not conspicuous for its piety. He made known his intentions to the woman of the house, and she murmured vaguely that "she'd go out and see." She was long in returning, and after a tiresome wait the missionary went to the door and called with some impatience:

"Are n't you coming in? Don't you care anything about your souls?"

"Souls?" yelled the head of the family from the orchard. "We have n't got time to fool with our souls when the bees are swarmin'."

Caroline Lockhart

Trouble with the Tower

Among the engravings that adorned the walls of a Toledo woman's home was one big one of the leaning tower of Pisa.

One morning, shortly after the advent of a new maid, the mistress of the house noticed that the picture of the tower hung crooked. She straightened it, and said nothing of the matter to the new servant, who had evidently shifted it while dusting.

The next day the picture was again crooked; the same thing happened the next day, and the next. Finally, one morning, chancing to be in the room where the picture was, the mistress said to the maid, as she dusted:

"Mary, you've hung that picture of the tower crooked. Just look at it!"

"That's what I say, mum," returned the domestic: "look at it! The only way I can git that blamed tower to hang straight is to hang the picture crooked."

Edwin Tarrisse

The Heathen, the Coffee, and the Ten Cents

"I've got ten cents to spend!" cried a little girl in German-town. "I saved it out of my heathen money that Mamma gave me for going without coffee."

"But if it was for the heathen, how *could* you save it?" asked the aunt to whom this confidence was made.

"Why," explained the little girl, with a convincing smile, "you see, I did n't drink so much more coffee than Mamma expected I would n't, that there was enough for the heathen and ten cents besides!"

Walnuts and Wine



THE
STANDARD
FROM
1780 to 1911

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COOKING AND DRINKING.

Unequaled for smoothness, delicacy,
natural flavor and that uniformity
which insures best results.

IT IS ABSOLUTELY PURE

BEWARE OF IMITATIONS; the genuine is
put up in Blue Wrapper and Yellow Label and
with our trade-mark on the back.

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Walter Baker & Co. Ltd.

DORCHESTER, MASS.

Reg. U. S. Pat. Off.

Established 1780



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Walnuts and Wine

SEEING ONLY WAS BELIEVING

A trio of professional story-tellers were off in a cosy corner of the club, spinning yarns. Brown had just told a most unbelievable story, and the other two glanced at each other questioningly.

"Well, I assure you, gentlemen," said Brown, "if I had n't seen it myself I should n't have believed it."

"Ha—h'm—well," said one of the two doubtful ones, "you must remember, old man, that we did n't see it." R. M. Winans

THE WOODSMAN'S REASON

Among a party of Bostonians who spent some time in a hunting-camp in Maine were two college professors. No sooner had the learned gentlemen arrived than their attention was attracted by the unusual position of the stove, which was set on posts about four feet high.

This circumstance afforded one of the professors immediate opportunity to comment upon the knowledge that woodsmen gain by observation.

"Now," said he, "this man has discovered that heat emanating from a stove strikes the roof, and that the circulation is so quickened that the camp is warmed in much less time than would be required were the stove in its regular place on the floor."

But the other professor ventured the opinion that the stove was elevated to be above the window in order that cool and pure air could be had at night.

The host, being of a practical turn, thought that the stove was set high in order that a good supply of green wood could be placed under it.

After much argument, they called the guide and asked why the stove was in such a position.

The man grinned. "Well, gents," he explained, "when I brought the stove up the river I lost most of the stove-pipe overboard; so we had to set the stove up that way so as to have the pipe reach through the roof." Taylor Edwards

THE OLD-TIME RELIGION

Presbyterian Elder: "Nae, my mon, there'll be nane o' they new-fangled methods in Heaven."

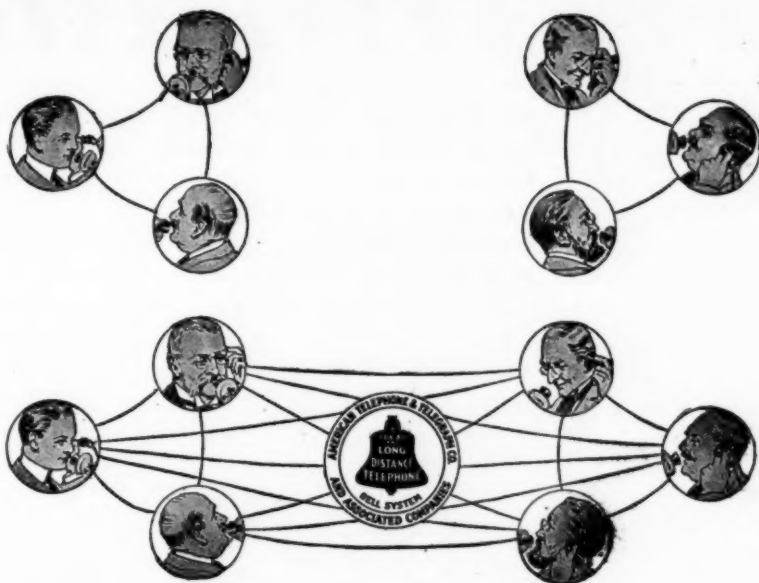
Listener: "I don't know how you can be sure."

Elder: "Sure? Why, mon, gin they tried it, the whole Presbyterian kirk wad rise up an' gang oot in a body."

M. L. Hayward

Walnuts and Wine

Union Increases Use



When two groups of telephone subscribers are joined together the usefulness of each telephone is increased.

Take the simplest case — two groups, each with three subscribers. As separate groups there are possible only six combinations—only six lines of communication. Unite these same two groups, and instead of only six, there will be fifteen lines of communication.

No matter how the groups are located or how they are connected by exchanges, combination in-

creases the usefulness of each telephone, it multiplies traffic, it expands trade.

The increase is in accordance with the mathematical rule. If two groups of a thousand each are united, there will be a million more lines of communication.

No one subscriber can use all of these increased possibilities, but each subscriber uses some of them.

Many groups of telephone subscribers have been united in the Bell System to increase the usefulness of each telephone, and meet the public demand for universal service.

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AND ASSOCIATED COMPANIES**

One Policy

One System

Universal Service

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Walnuts and Wine

CUPID'S SPORT

By McLandburgh Wilson

Sparkling snow upon the ground
Hard crunching;
Pretty maid and manly swain
Close bunching;
Sunshine bright or starlight pale
Long staying:
That is what D. Cupid calls
Good sleighing.

Thick ice in the atmosphere
Unbroken;
Youth and maiden freezing, chill,
Naught spoken;
Gaslight—daylight—all the same,
Frost spreading:
That is what D. Cupid calls
Hard sledding.

PUNISHMENT

A popular revivalist had been holding services at a town in Mississippi, when a heavy rain came on, and he accepted an invitation to pass the night at the house of one of the townsmen. Observing the preacher's drenched clothing, the host brought out a suit of his own and sent his guest upstairs to don it.

The good man had made the change and was on his way back to the sitting-room, when the woman of the house came out of another room, holding in her hands the big family Bible, out of which the minister was to be invited to read a chapter before the family went to bed.

She was not, however, in a very amiable frame of mind, for careful housewives are likely to be put out of sorts by the advent of unexpected company. Seeing the revivalist in his borrowed garments, she mistook him for her husband, and as he passed in front of her she lifted the book and brought it down sharply on his head.

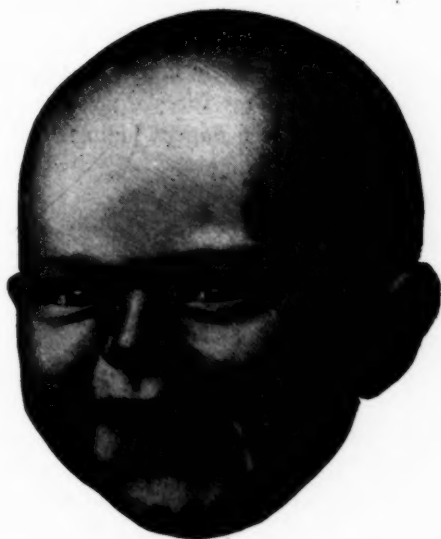
"There!" she exclaimed. "Take that for asking him to stay all night!"

Fenimore Martin

Walnuts and Wine

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"FOR MINE"



Mennen's ^{Borated Talcum} Powder

keeps my skin in healthy condition.

Sample Box for 4c. stamp.

GERHARD MENNEN CO.
NEWARK, N. J.



Trade Mark

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THE SLEIGH BELLE

By La Touche Hancock

Hear the sleigh belle, how she chatters
With her beau!
How she chatters, chatters, chatters
Of innumerable matters,
Quite heedless of the spatters
Of the snow.

Though the weather for this riding
May be rough,
Yet the sleigh belle loves the gliding,
And quite adores the sliding
With her fifteen fingers hiding
In her muff!

PROFIT AND LOSS

An old artisan who prided himself on his ability to drive a close bargain contracted to paint a huge barn in the neighborhood for the small sum of twelve dollars.

"Why on earth did you agree to do it for so little?" his brother inquired.

"Well," said the old painter, "you see, the owner is a mighty unreliable man. If I'd said I'd charge him twenty-five dollars, likely he'd have only paid me nineteen. And if I charge him twelve dollars, he may not pay me but nine. So I thought it over, and decided to paint it for twelve dollars, so I would n't lose so much."

J. T.

HIS BUSY DAYS

Miss Smith, who is in the habit of assigning long and difficult lessons, called the other evening at the home of her brightest pupil, who had been absent several days.

"Is Willie ill?" she inquired solicitously.

"Oh, no," responded the mother; "he is quite well, thank you."

"He has been absent several days," hinted the teacher.

"Yes," replied the mother, looking innocently at the teacher, "Willie is so busy studying his lessons that he has n't time to go to school."

C. H. Martin



The influence of the individual investor in the world of finance is comparatively insignificant. The financial power, however, which is created through the united action of many individual investors may exceed that exerted by the strongest banking syndicate.

The Sterling Debenture Corporation is a medium through which the united financial power of more than 45,000 discriminating investors is applied to the creation and extension of American Enterprises.

An analysis (Jan. 1, 1911) of our rapidly increasing and world-wide clientele discloses the real power of that idea for which the Sterling Debenture Corporation was organized, and upon which its business has been established. This analysis is herewith published for your consideration.

344	Architects	3284	Merchants
1451	Army and Navy Officers	1667	Physicians
2210	Bank Officials and Directors	687	Professors and Teachers
785	Bookkeepers, Stenographers, etc.	1384	Public Officials
1493	Clergymen (All denominations)	1397	Railway and Steamship Directors and Officials
107	Consuls and Ministers of Foreign Countries	135	Real Estate Dealers
626	Contractors	1217	Retired (Including Trustees)
2855	Corporation Directors and Officials	186	Stock Exchange Members
807	Dentists	162	Students
751	Druggists	1686	Telephone and Telegraph Officials and Operators
728	Electricians	1861	Women, married
2418	Engineers and Skilled Mechanics	1744	Women, unmarried
410	Farmers		
124	Hotel Proprietors and Managers	4538	Miscellaneous Occupations (less than 100 in each classification)
586	Insurance Officials, Directors and Agents	7029	Occupations not given, but probably distributed proportionately among above
321	Journalists, Publishers and Printers		
1474	Lawyers		
988	Manufacturers		

Such confidence as is evidenced in these figures entails a moral and business responsibility which is not lightly held by the Sterling Debenture Corporation.

In the reasonable expectation of the larger returns that reward creators of new business values you are often justified in temporarily foregoing such immediate returns as are offered by most listed stocks. We have some interesting information to give you with reference to an investment opportunity of this character. Write for it.



Walnuts and Wine

GENEROSITY

A well-known New York contractor went into the tailor's, donned his new suit, and left his old one for repairs. Then he sought a café and refreshed the inner man; but as he reached in his pocket for the money to settle his check, he realized that he had neglected to transfer both purse and watch when he left his suit. As he hesitated, somewhat embarrassed, he saw a bill on the floor at his feet. Seizing it thankfully, he stepped to the cashier's desk and presented both check and money.

"That was a two-dollar bill," he explained when he counted his change.

"I know it," the cashier replied, with a toss of her blonde head. "I'm dividing with you. I saw it first."

Etta Anthony Baker

NOT SO SLOW AFTER ALL

During a conversation between an Irishman and a Jew, the Irishman asked how it was that the Jews were so wise.

"Because," said the Jew, "we eat a certain kind of fish;" and he offered to sell one for ten dollars.

After paying his money, the Irishman received a small dried fish. He bit into it, then exclaimed: "Why, this is only a smoked herring."

"See?" said the Jew. "You are getting wise already."

J. S. Ketcham

LOOK OUT

By J. J. O'Connell

He went out to skate,
But he fell in the water.
How we rush to our fate!
He went out to skate;
Meeting Mamma and Kate,
He was watching the daughter.
He went out to skate
But he fell in the water.

A REGULAR COMMUNICANT

After the sermon on Sunday morning the rector welcomed and shook hands with a young German.

"And are you a regular communicant?" said the rector.

"Yes," said the German; "I take the 7.45 every morning."

M. L. Hayward

Walnuts and Wine

"THE NEWPORT OF THE SOUTH"

Hotel

PARK-IN-THE-PINES

AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA

**A Charming Winter Home Under Sunny
Southern Skies**

THIS handsomely appointed hotel at Aiken, S. C., is in a region famed as a health center. The pine-laden atmosphere is the driest east of the Rockies, with a mean temperature of 52 degrees. The water supply is from the purest of artesian springs.

HOTEL PARK-IN-THE-PINES

stands on elevated ground in the midst of two hundred acres of long leaf pine. It is one of the newest and most complete tourist hostelries in the south. It has 400 feet southern frontage, is provided with broad verandas and a solarium, and contains 300 spacious rooms. Its interiors are luxuriously furnished and provided with every modern convenience. *Consumptives excluded.*

Aiken is easily reached by the Southern Railway from New York in 22 hours, in through Pullman Sleepers.

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Polo**

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J. A. SHERRARD

HOTEL PARK-IN-THE-PINES

AIKEN, SOUTH CAROLINA

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Walnuts and Wine

A NEW INTERPRETATION

The father of a Germantown lad had given him a ten-cent piece and a quarter of a dollar, telling him that he might put one or the other on the church's contribution-plate.

At dinner the father asked the boy which coin he had given.

"Well, Father," explained the youngster, "at first it seemed to me that I ought to put the quarter on the plate; but just in time I remembered the saying, 'The Lord loveth a cheerful giver,' and I knew I could give the ten-cent piece a great deal more cheerfully. So I put that in."

E. T.

ENGLISH AS SPOKEN

George Lacy Hillier, English bicycle and tricycle champion in the days of the high wheel and hard tire, used to tell an amusing story about his trainer.

It appears that the trainer would, at times, get on Hillier's nerves, by calling him Mr. 'Illier. One day, in exasperation, Hillier said to him, "Why do you always call me Mr. 'Illier? It is not my name, you know."

The trainer stood back in astonishment, and replied, "Well, if a haich and a hi and a hel and a hel and a hi and a he and a har don't spell 'Illier, I'd like to know what it do spell."

F. H. Mason

SURE TEST

Ted: "How can I tell whether she loves me?"

Ned: "When you call on her notice whether she sets the clock forward or backward."

J. J. O'Connell

NO CHANCE

At a charity bazaar in a New England town an elderly gentleman was approached by a charming young woman who urged that he take a "chance" on a meerschaum pipe.

"I'd be glad to take a chance if I smoked," said the old gentleman pleasantly.

"Oh, but you can learn!" exclaimed the young woman. "Do take a chance. Only a quarter."

"No, thank you," said the old gentleman. "Tobacco does n't agree with me. Why, I'd have no earthly use for that pipe."

"Take a chance, any way," persisted the young woman. "There is n't the least probability of your winning it, you know."

Howard Morse

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THE BOOK NEWS MONTHLY
PHILADELPHIA and NEW YORK

Walnuts and Wine

THEIR FIRST WORDS

By William Wallace Whitelock

When Frank, my little brother, grew
To be a year or more,
And started in, as children do,
To learn to speak a word or two,
Which soon become a score,
He showed great aptitude, and said,
"Goo-goo! Goo-goo!" and wagged his head.

When Henry followed, later on,
And reached the speaking age,
The age which marks the rosy dawn
Of youth, that seems so fair—when gone—
Upon the poet's page,
He, too, committed verbal crimes
By saying "Oodle!" seven times.

But Mabel, younger than the twain
By very many years,
Did show the intellectual gain
The race has made in pow'r of brain
By giving three strong cheers.
When first she spoke—our eyes were swimmin'
With pride—she shouted: "Votes for Women!"

WANTED HIS REBATES

"Since the abolition of the 'pass' idea," recently remarked a railway man, "officers of transportation companies have been relieved of much importuning from persons desirous of riding free; but now and then an instance occurs of some individual trying to get the best of the companies.

"One of the funniest I've ever heard of came within the experience of an agent of a company whose steamboats ply the Great Lakes. It is a standing rule of this company that clergymen and Indians can travel on its boats for half-fare. A short time ago the agent in question was approached by an Indian preacher from Canada, who asked for free transportation on the ground that he was entitled to one-half rebate because he was an Indian, and the other half because he was a clergyman."

Elgin Burroughs

Walnuts and Wine



The original and genuine Chartreuse has always been and still is made by the Carthusian Monks (Pères Chartreux), who, since their expulsion from France, have been located at Tarragona, Spain; and, although the old labels and insignia originated by the Monks have been adjudged by the Federal Courts of this country to be still the exclusive property of the Monks, their world-renowned product is nowadays known as

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GOLDEN WORDS FITLY SPOKEN

is an inspiring, fascinating volume just issued

A man is measured by his companions, and the editor, H. Wellington Wood, widely known as the author of "Winning Men One by One," has skilfully culled some four hundred of the choicest quotations from more than one hundred eminent authors, association with whom he has found most helpful in twenty-four years of intimate acquaintance with their writings. This unique collection is most attractively presented in specially selected bold-face type, easily read, the letter-press in two colors, profusely illustrated, and richly bound in decorative cloth covers at \$1.50 net, and in limp ooze, neatly boxed, at \$2.50 net. *A Beautiful Gift Book.* Sold by all booksellers.

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DETERMINED TO STAY

In the service of a Richmond family is an old darky who, in one capacity or another, has served them since his birth. He is now the coachman.

Of recent years the old fellow has grown a bit testy and insubordinate, giving much trouble and annoyance to his mistress. Not long ago his conduct became unbearable, and the lady of the house decided to dismiss him. Calling him into her presence, she said:

"Moses, I cannot stand this any longer. You must look for another situation. You will leave here at the end of the month."

The aged darky regarded her in silent amusement for a while, and then the characteristic "loyalty" came to the surface.

"I ain't gwine to do anything of de kind, Missy," he said. "I drove yo' to de church to be baptized; I drove yo' to yo' marriage; and I'll stay to drive yo' to yo' funeral!"

Fenimore Martin

A CONCLUSION

By Harold Susman

This thing it is so general,
It may be called a rule:
There is no one so wise he can't
Be cheated by a fool!

CAN YOU DENY—

- that a picture may be badly hung even when well executed?
- that the more pork goes up, the less likely it is to go down?
- that many gilt-edged securities confine their gilt to the edges?
- that present-day aeronauts are the only high fliers ever to have made money at it?
- that there's a lot of difference between the high cost of living and the cost of high living?
- that the passive passenger in a crowded car who (seemingly) pays for the right to stand up is not standing up for his rights?

Warwick James Price

CAUSE AND EFFECT

Mrs. Hittmell: "I did n't hear you come in the house last night."

Mr. Hittmell: "No. I suppose that is why I did n't hear you!"

Stewart Roberts


Walnuts and Wine

All over America

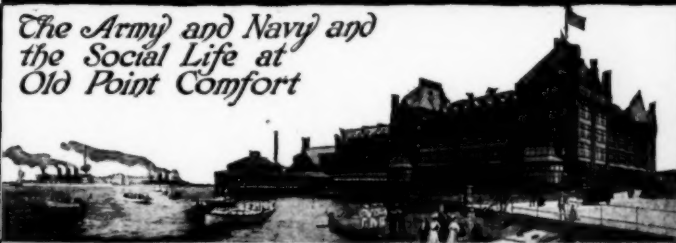
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An Old and Well-Tried Remedy

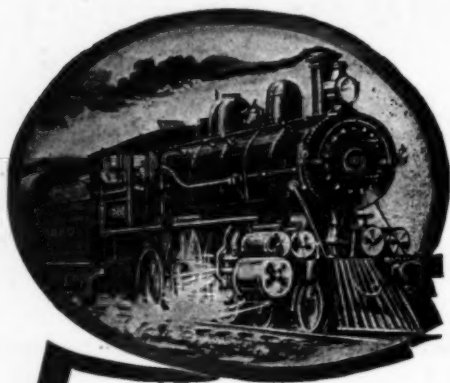
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has been used for over FIFTY YEARS by MILLIONS of MOTHERS for their CHILDREN WHILE TEETHING with PERFECT SUCCESS. IT SOOTHES THE CHILD, SOFTENS THE GUMS, ALLAYS ALL PAIN, CURES WIND COLIC, and is the best remedy for DIARRHŒA. Sold by all Druggists in every part of the world. Be sure and ask for *Mrs. Winslow's Soothing Syrup*, and take no other kind.

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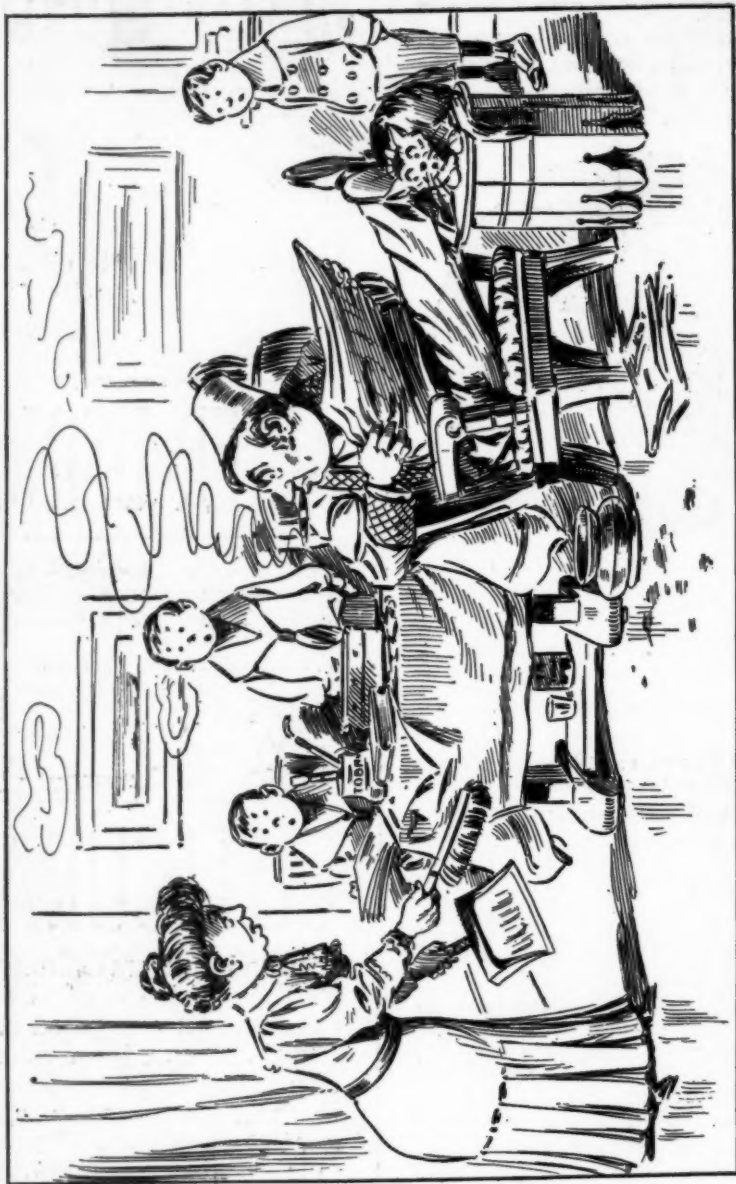


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THE CAT.—"Hello! More trouble."

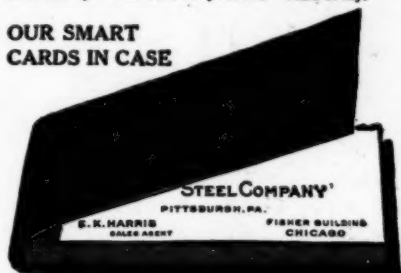
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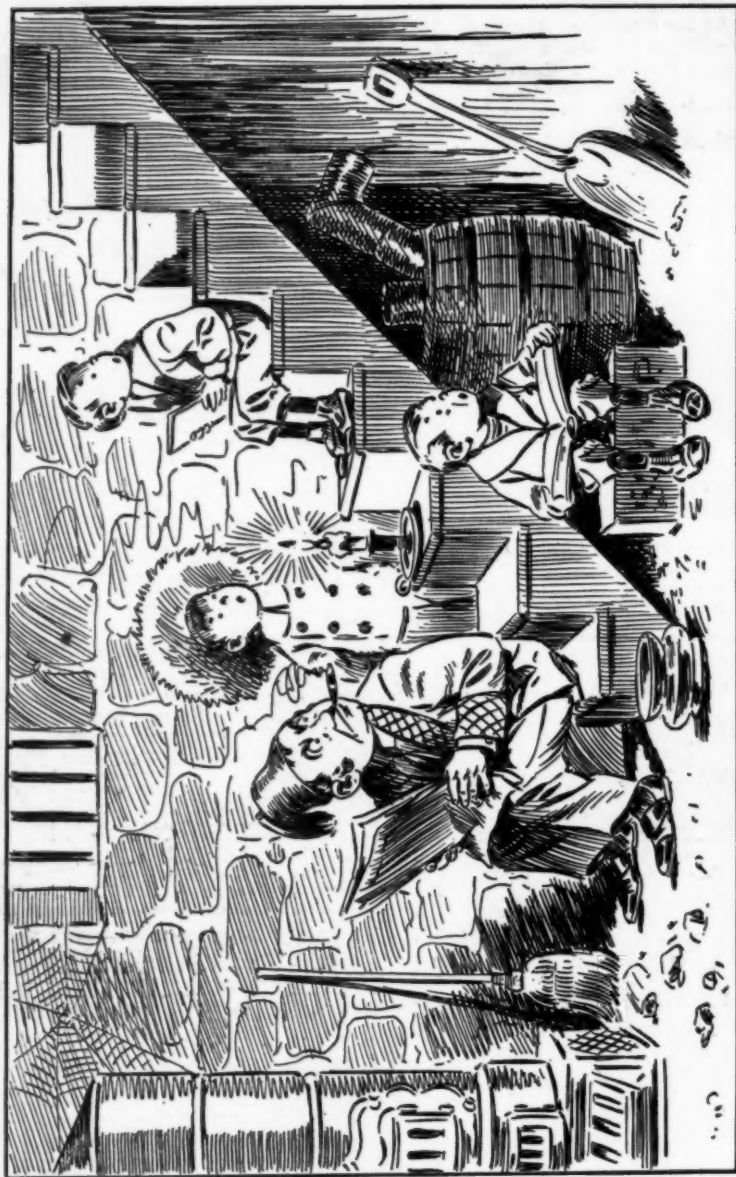
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JOHN.—"No: but I will be if you don't let up grouching. Darn it! You won't let a fellow have a moment's peace. I thought I'd escape your rag-chewing down here."

SUE.—"Don't you let that cat up or there'll be trouble."

JOHN.—"Heavens! That's just what I did. I forgot all about the cat."



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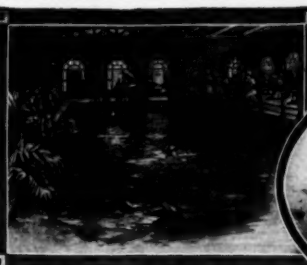
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SUZ.—"There! I knew it! Just look at that floor and window-sill! Right out of the dirty coal cellar all over the new paint and varnish! It's certainly fierce! Here, get out! S—cat!!"

JOHN.—"Gosh! She's switched off on the cat now instead of me. He! he! he! he!"

THE BOYS.—"He! he! he! he! Come on, pop, we'd better get out of the house 'fore she lights on us again."

THE CAT.—"Gee whiz! She's particular about a little dirt! I'd better stayed in the cellar."

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JOHN.—"Nix! Going up to the bathroom to get ready for dinner, daren't walk on the stairs; my wife'd get a fit; she's dippy on dirt."

NEIGHBOR.—“That’s a good one! He! he!”

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